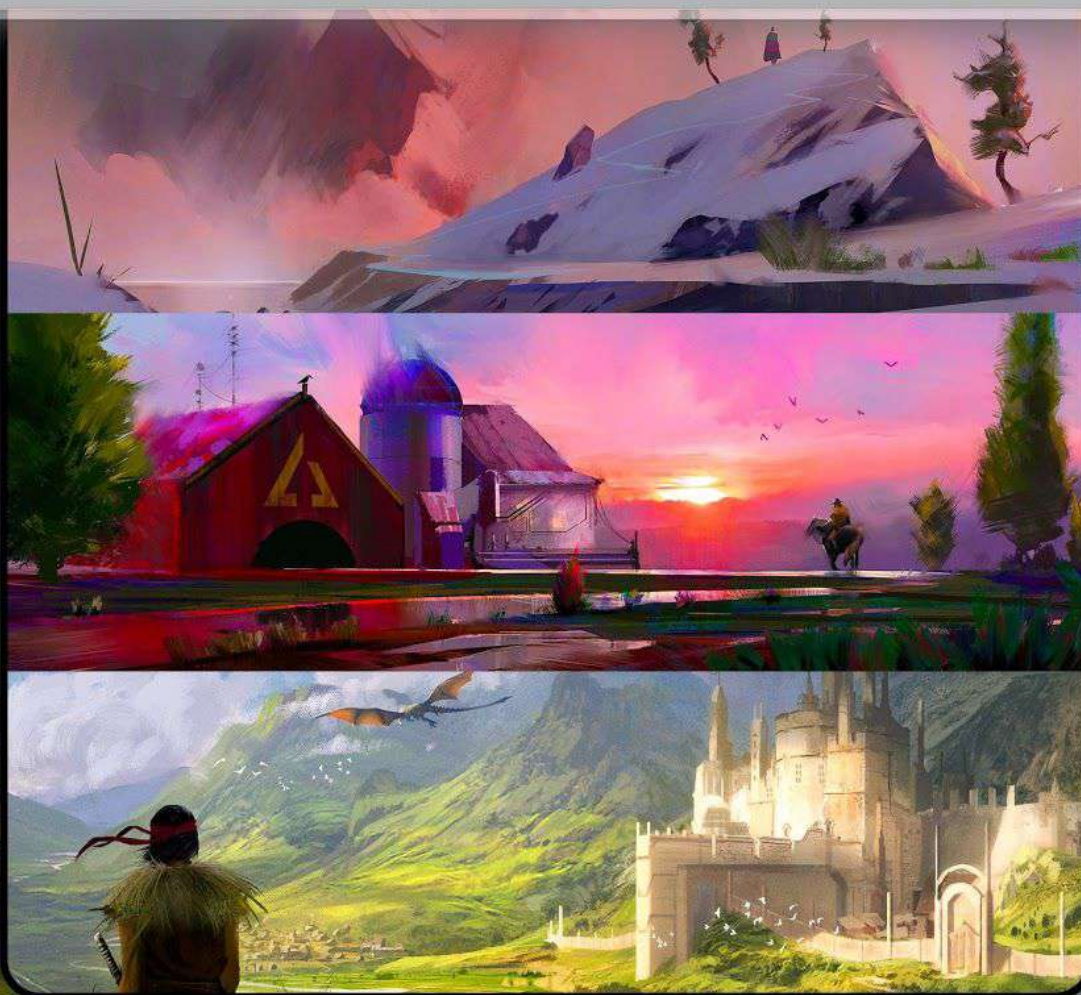


W A L I D F E G H A L I

CONCEPT ART ACCELERATOR

5 PILLARS OF THE ARTIST'S PATHWAY TO SUCCESS



 evenant

Dare to mine the fertile veins of creativity
that reside deep within you.

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Your Art Journey Starts Here

There are countless tutorials and guides out there on how to paint landscapes, robots, portraits — really anything between heaven and earth. A lot of them actually teach you some great things along the way as you improve. But how many times have you tried following these tutorials, only to end up with shabby results, or confused as to where to go after you're done?

What you're reading now is your guide to finally knowing exactly what to do to get going, and actually achieve the results you're after: those majestic environments, mighty characters, and lush concepts.

So what's the trick?

Let's just set this straight right away: there is no secret formula to becoming amazing at art. There is no magic technique, tutorial or walkthrough that will suddenly make you a master of your craft.

That said, there are certainly many ways to waste your time, get stuck, and get lost going in circles. I want to show you how to do the opposite of that.

In this ebook, I'll teach you how to cut out all the unnecessary fluff around progressing as an artist, how to hone in on what will really make you great at art, and show you my own methods that you can use to achieve success. While these methods won't be enough on their own to get you to that goal, they are designed to be concise and clear-cut, so that you will know exactly what to do in order to start, develop and finish your artworks.

Now, let's begin on the pathway towards your artistic success. Your journey through the magnificent world of art starts here. It's time to take your skills to the next level!



Becoming Awesome At Art

Anyone worth their salt will tell you the way to become really awesome at anything is to “just practice”. But that’s kind of obvious, isn’t it? The more you practice, the better you become. That’s just the way things go. You know that already. So what?

Something’s *missing* from that advice.

The famous saying, “Practice makes perfect” has a good ring to it. But I think it’s slightly misleading. A better way to look at it is that **practice makes progress**.

You will always progress. You will always make improvements to your technique, your expression, your overall creation. Let go of the need to make perfect art — perfect art doesn’t exist. Just paint.

Here’s what I want you to focus on: *practice smart*.

Practice with a purpose behind every artwork you create. There's mediocre practice and there's great practice.

Mediocre practice is trying to draw a busy sci-fi street scene without having any knowledge of the fundamentals (especially perspective) — you'll just become frustrated and may end up ditching that artwork altogether.

Great practice is to take a simple scene, look at a real reference, learn to see the key shapes and important aspects of that reference, then paint an impression of what you see.

Mediocre practice is painting things that you're not very interested in, which can make you frustrated and less interested in art as a whole.

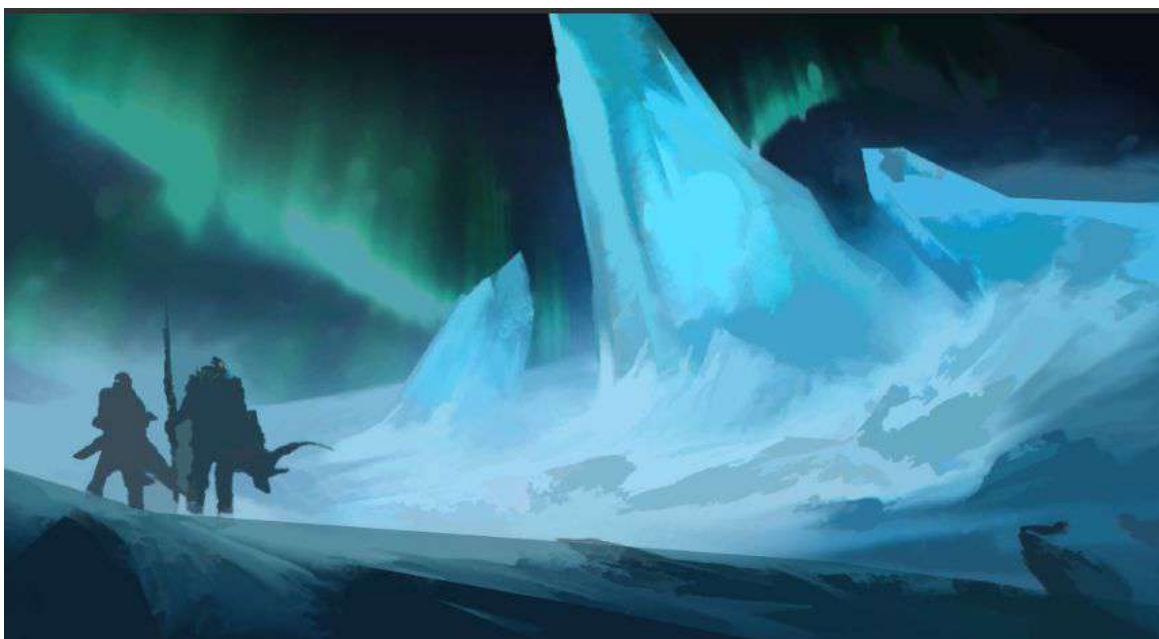
Great practice is painting what you love to paint, and trying new and exciting, but attainable things.



First and foremost — you want to start **simple** in the beginning.

Simple = Awesome

See the painting above? It is simpler than you think! This is what we're mainly seeing here:



See how we can simplify this? Same story. Same vibe. We'll talk more about what it *means* to simplify in the next part!

It's so much fun to finish drawings that look good, and the way to do that is to stay simple and focus on what *does* look good, meaning focusing on the simple makes it easier and more fun to create art. This mindset stays with you from the very start, until... well, until forever! Always stay simple in your approach to everything.

So here is my main piece of advice: you need to spend a fair amount of time practicing the basics in the beginning. This will pay off so much, you have no idea! Trust me on this.

One of the **most common mistakes** that I see with my students in both digital painting, concept art, drawing, and so on, is too little time spent on getting a good grip on the basics of drawing and painting.

There will be times when you feel that some painting exercises in this ebook are arduous and, quite frankly, a bit boring, but just **stick with it**. Any time you put into learning these skills will **pay off greatly**.

We will do some really fun sketching in this course, but we need to start off with the exercises that are going to build your drawing foundation.

One last thing: Don't worry about "talent". Talent means nothing if you don't put in the time honing your skills. Actually that's what I think talent is — simply an internal drive that motivates you to practice enough to become really good. But that's besides the point — just practice, BUT...

... practice SMART!



Patience & Persistence

Sometimes, like all other artists, I struggle with motivation to do art. This will happen to you as well, and it is a part of the life of a creator. There are times I just want to shut down Photoshop and watch a TV show instead of doing music, art, working on my business, or anything productive, often at a time when I really *want* to be productive. This is when it is really important to push through.

While writing this, I thought of a fable that I wanted to share with you. I think this will help you in your struggle to keep progressing and creating art. This is The King's Pond:

"Once, a king announced that anyone who wanted the position of personal assistant shall meet him at the palace. Many people gathered at the steps of his hall. The king led them to a pond and said, 'Whoever will take this pond's water and fill this pot with it will be chosen for the post. But remember, there is a *hole* in the pot.'

Some people left without giving it a single try. Some people tried a few times and then said, 'The king has already chosen someone else. This is silly. Let's leave!' Eventually, there was only one man still there.

Patiently, he kept pouring pond water into the pot. He filled the pot tirelessly, yet it still went through the hole and out on the ground. He tried filling up the pot over and over again.

At last the pond became empty... but there was something left *sparkling* in the pond. The man found a ring adorned with emeralds! And so he gave it to the king. At this the king said, 'This treasure is a reward for your patience and diligent persistence. You managed to do what no one else did. You, sir, are fit for the job.'"

The moral of the story is that instant gratification, motivation and inspiration may be nice to have, but in the end what pays off the most is **patience and persistence**.

On days when you have motivation, creating art is easy. But there are days when you don't want to draw, and this is when your practice in patience will set you apart from others. This is what makes you push through.

Learn patience, and any struggles that might seem futile and that don't give immediate results will be worth all the hard work. This is why I value patience and persistence much more than motivation and inspiration.

Having said that, let's move on to the mindset of simplification, so that you can really make the most out of your art creation sessions.

Learning to Simplify

One mindset that you will see me talk about throughout all of my courses and content is **simplification**; never complicate what doesn't need to be complicated. Now check this out: In order to be able to paint art well, you should start by changing the way you see. This is what art is really all about.

Try to be aware of your surroundings wherever you go. Make it into a mental exercise — think about the environments you are in, analyze what constitutes them, and even how you might paint them step by step.

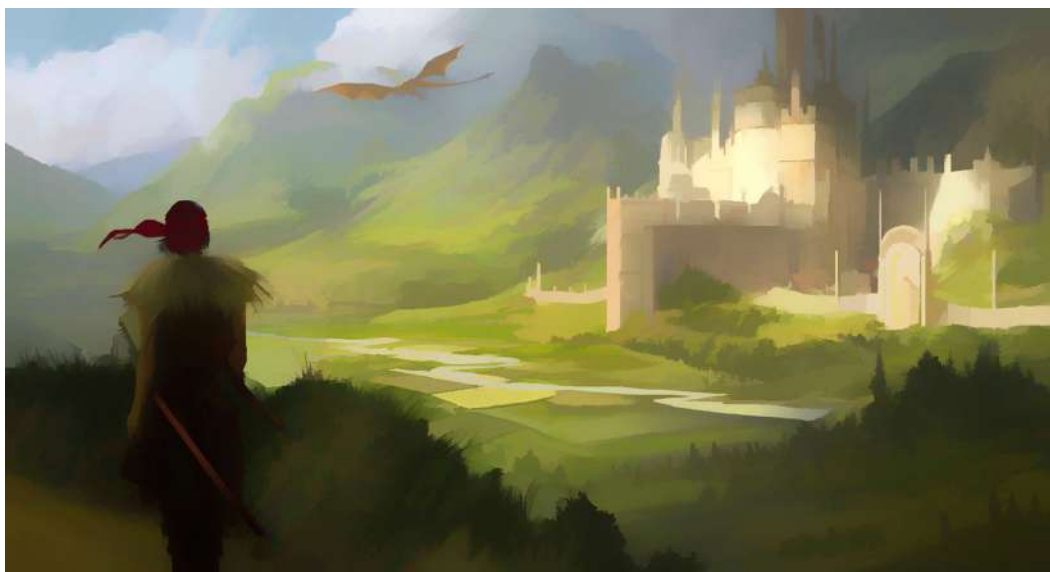
Do the same for people, objects, different scenes, and so on. See a few trees outside your window? How would you build them up in your painting? Find the big shapes that make up everything around you, and notice that most of it is made up out of simple shapes. A mountain is typically a big triangular shape, clouds have more circular shapes and flow, trees are oval shapes – *really* simplify things!

Take a look at the following environment painting I created a few years back:



Do you notice the big shapes in it? How would **you** simplify this? Squint your eyes and blur your vision to see the big shapes. Let me show you what I mean.

After you've looked at the image above, take a look at the one here, and notice how I've simplified the landscape into fewer, big major shapes:



The same story. The same composition. If you squint your eyes at the original painting, this is pretty much what you'll see.

Almost everything is the same — what's the difference? The details!

What can we take from this? Well, that details aren't actually that important. The shapes, forms and composition are by far more important for our overall story and concept, and learning how to simplify our paintings' most fundamental aspects.

This is really what I see when I walk around and look at things.

No, I'm not crazy (OK, maybe just a little) — I just make it into an exercise to try and simplify everything I see, so I know how to build up my scenes, achieve a nice composition, and focus on the most important parts of art and design.

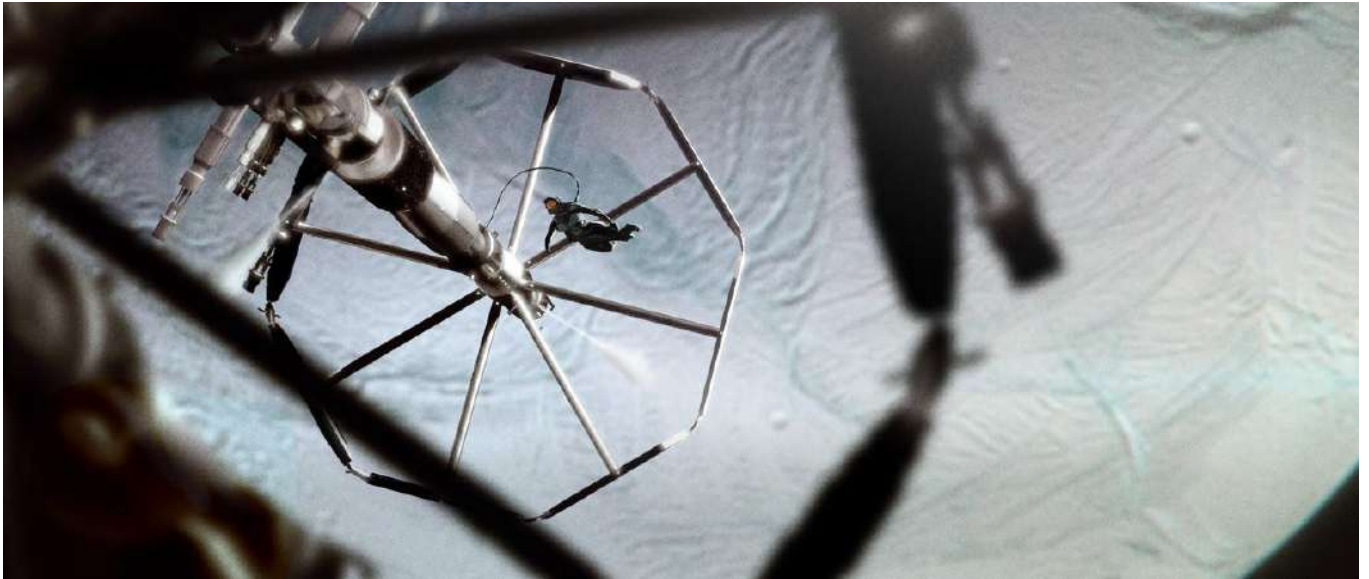
When you do this more and more, you'll start to realize how everything is built out of the same fundamental shapes and lines. This will, in turn, help you overcome the crippling fear of, "How do I paint that?".

As you practice, you will forget about details and focus on the foundations of art. Details come later, once the scene is already set.

That's the easy part.

I always say that the first 30 minutes of a painting is arguably the most important. This is when you're planning your compositions, sketching, and trying out different things.

Once your scene is set, and you have your major shapes and forms established, detailing can go on autopilot to "season" it up.



The Artist's Pathway to Success

What makes amazing art?

In all forms of masterful creation, the very foundation of what we love about it actually boils down to mastering a few key principles. A masterpiece of art is grounded in these simple fundamentals which I believe every single artist can use to achieve excellence.

Music creation works in the very same way. A godlike symphony can't exist without a solid understanding of the very simplest of all fundamentals.

Learning these fundamentals will be the very first stepping stone for you on your pathway to success. The detailing and improvement of your painting comes later.

There is a pathway that you can follow to ensure that you constantly progress as an artist and overcome the issues you face along the way.

5 Pillars Of The Artist's Success Pathway

Here are the five pillars along our pathway as we progress as artists:

5 PILLARS OF THE ARTIST SUCCESS PATH



Pillar 1: Learning the Fundamentals

Pillar 2: Create, Create, Create!

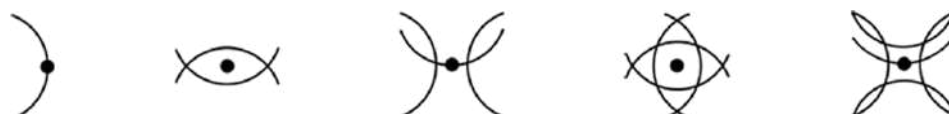
Pillar 3: Studies & Subjects

Pillar 4: New Techniques

Pillar 5: Never Stop Learning

Following these bearing pillars and making sure that your efforts are always directed towards improving your skills will inevitably lead to you creating art that is noticeably better each time you sit down to work at your computer, or draw in that sketchbook.

Let's look at them one by one.





Pillar 1 - Learning the Fundamentals



Fundamentals. Masters talk about them. Teachers nag you to learn them. Why? Why should you bother with circles, triangles and squares? Why learn a bunch of theoretical mumbo jumbo when all you want to do is paint awesome landscapes, characters and tell stories with your art?

Well, look at it this way: if you want to build a house, you need bricks, wood, stone, and steel — materials, right?

And in order to take these materials and turn them into a house, you need the tools and the knowledge of how to use them.

In this sense, art and design are no different.

As we start out, we need to work on the most important aspects of all art creation: the key fundamentals. These fundamentals are what build up everything we see and experience visually.

I have simplified the fundamentals of art and design to help you understand them as quickly and effortlessly as possible. The fundamentals I'll talk about in this ebook are:

- Design Elements
- Design Principles, Including
- Composition
- Flow
- Contrast & Framing
- Unity & Harmony
- Balance
- Rhythm
- Perspective
- Color

And these all go hand in hand. It might look like there's A LOT of stuff to take in and to learn here, but really once you start understanding the core principles of how to create nice looking art, all of this will become natural and intuitive to you.

You simply need to begin learning them and applying them to your artwork more and more as you progress. Throughout my years as a concept artist, I have picked up a ton of techniques, mindsets and, I dare to even call them *secrets* of creating art. I've simplified all of this in the content I provide, such as this ebook, my courses, tutorials and so on.

So let's dive into these simplified techniques and fundamentals more, starting with the building blocks of art and imagery itself.

Building Blocks of Imagery

The material you, as an artist, use are not bricks and wood, but design elements.



The tools you have are not hammers and saws, but brushes, canvases, computers, sketchbooks, pencils and software.

And the way we learn to compose and arrange these elements is by incorporating design principles and techniques.

Design elements are what we use to build up all our paintings. They are what we actually see.

When you're observing the objects in your surroundings and the environments around you, the first thing you think is: "this is a tree", and "this is a city center", and "this is a castle", or "a person", and so on.

But I want you to step away from that a bit. The thing that sets professional artists, including painters, photographers, cinematographers, designers and so on, apart from other people is the ability to *see* the underlying elements that make things up. And this can be broken down through something called **first principles**.

Now, when I was about 18 years old, I started studying mechanical engineering in my hometown of Gothenburg, Sweden. I learned a lot about physics, mechanics, thermodynamics, math, engines, and so on, and I eventually graduated with an engineering degree.

The most important thing that I learned, which will stay with me forever in all aspects of my life, is the method physicists use to understand the universe, or the first principles.

What this means is to not only see something and try to understand it at face value, but to deconstruct it to its most fundamental elements — the simplest parts that make up this thing.



So, when you're looking at a tree, you're not actually just seeing a tree — that's just how your brain interprets it. After seeing many trees, it becomes a given that what you're seeing is a tree.

That is why it can be a bit hard to break out of that way of seeing things, and instead enter a non-judgmental state where you don't take anything for granted, but rather look at its most essential building blocks.

Looking at the tree above, you're actually seeing the following things:

1. The silhouette, or **shape** of the tree and its branches and leaves.
2. The general **form** inside this silhouette, which makes it look spherical and cylindrical because of the lighting and the surface contours of the bark.
3. The sense of **depth**, or 3-dimensionality of the tree, including the branches that are in front of the trunk, leaves in the back, etc.
4. The overall **texture** of the tree, like the bark and leaves.
5. The **color** of the entire tree.

This is what you're *actually* seeing. What makes you come to the conclusion that this is a tree is simply your brain taking in these five elements and interpreting them as what you've learned to identify as a tree.

Now if you start thinking this way, you will begin to focus on what's really the most important way to get a pleasing image and simplify the way you paint.

Just by using the first two elements, **shape** and **form**, you can tell entire stories, with very little effort. You can convey your ideas more creatively and start to understand the environment that you're in and how to use your ideas and tell your story by turning them into paintings.

Don't start painting by thinking about the specific objects and environments, painting out a bunch of details, or wanting to make a super pretty picture — that just makes things harder for you, and makes you forget the most important thing: to convey a *story* or a concept.

Let's take a look at the fundamental design elements.

Fundamental Design Elements

What we call **design elements** are the building blocks of what you, as an artist, use to describe objects and scenes. By combining these together and using them in different ways, you can describe practically anything visual.

The design elements are:

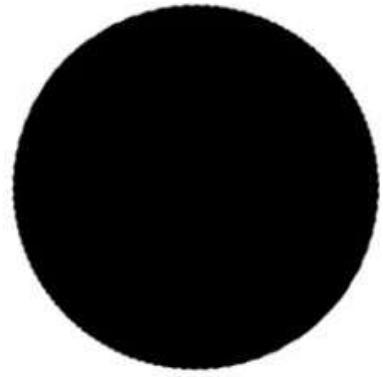
- Shape
- Forms
- Depth
- Texture
- Color

If you learn what these are, fundamentally, and you understand how they function in our designs and artistically crafted stories, you will know what to use to build up your painting from scratch.

You can use these elements to describe any material, object or scene. **Shape** is basically the silhouette. **Form** is the 3-dimensionality, described by light, cross-sections, and so on. **Depth** is the space, meaning atmospheric perspective, objects receding into the distance (AKA foreshortening), and objects in front of other objects. **Texture** is how something *feels* to the touch. And **color** is simply the color.

Let's look at a simple example.

Shape: just a circular shape. This can be anything, really: a moon, a planet, a plate, a satellite dish, a hole in the ground, etc.



We need more elements to describe it.

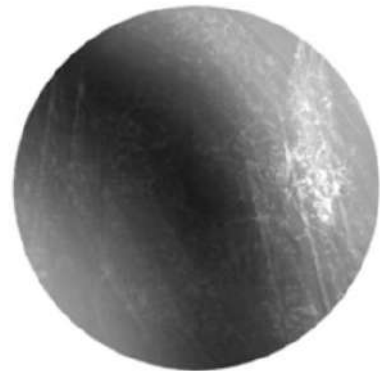


Form: By adding some lighting to this shape, we can now see that this is actually a sphere.

But what kind of sphere is it? What is it made of?

Texture: We add some texture to it and it looks more and more like a metal ball.

This could be enough to describe this metal ball, but we can also use **Space** to put it in an actual 3D environment, OR use color to describe what *kind* of metal it's made of.

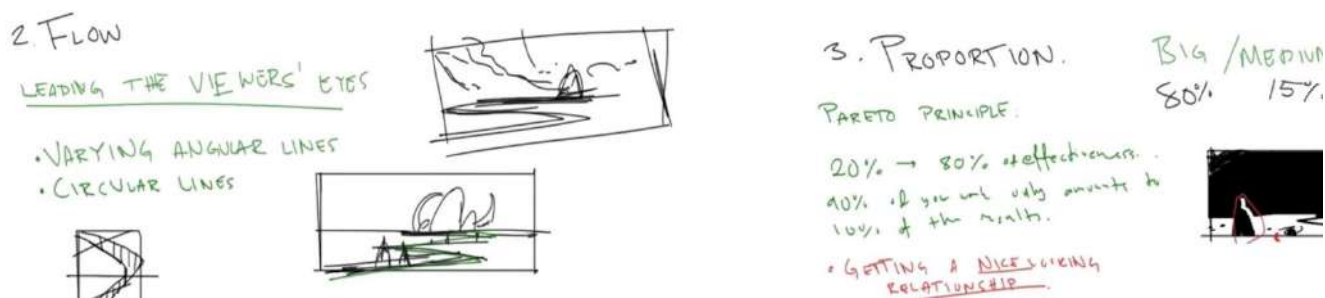


Color: Adding in the final element color, and spicing up the lighting a bit more, we can now see that this is a golden brass-like metal sphere. And we started from a single circular shape!

These elements are important to understand as building blocks for creating any of your objects and scenes. Start with the most important of all: **shapes**. Then, give them **form**, **texture**, give them **space** to live in, and so on.

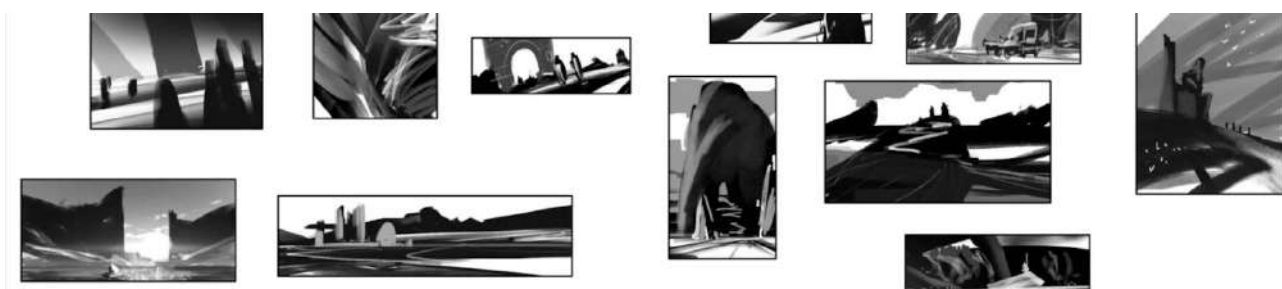
Fundamental Design Principles

Now let's look at design principles.



By using the different principles of design and art, AKA **design principles**, you will learn ways to *arrange* these elements, how to use them to your advantage, and how to present pleasing looking art. This is why I made this the first pillar of our art creation pathway — to illustrate the importance of understanding the very elements and principles that master artists use to create their masterworks.

This doesn't mean you need to spend years studying what triangular shape language can do for you, or the very best way to use visual rhythm. Rather, you simply want to have a solid grasp of what they are, so that when you are painting and you see that something is off, it will be easier to see what might be wrong and what you can do to fix it. Makes sense, right?



I strive for simplicity in all things. Fundamentals can become incredibly complicated and take away some of the life of art.

This is why I focus on the most important aspects of everything that art means to me. It is what allows me to create art that I can be proud of and make a living out of.

So hopefully you will be able to take these in, learn them, implement them in your artworks, and finally incorporate them into your routine so you don't have to think about them each time you're painting.

We all want to create nice-looking pictures, get a bunch of facebook likes, become super famous for our works and have money thrown at us.

Having this lust for the final image to just *look* nice makes you forget what the important thing is here — to compel your audience through a story or a concept.

Learning how to do this can be very time-consuming, and it can take many years to master all the techniques and learn all the fundamentals perfectly. There are hundreds of books and tutorials that spend hours and hours on just one subject, like color, or composition.

In this ebook and my courses, I have taken what I think are the most effective approaches and ideas and simplified everything for you so you don't have to think too much when you're painting. Because when you're creating art, you need to free yourself — free your mind and let the creativity take over.

Ultimately, you can tell entire stories using very primitive elements. Just look at comic books or sketches — these are very compelling and we understand so much of what's going on, even if it's not photorealistic and highly detailed.

The most important aspects of any visual art form are the simplest ones: just silhouettes, shapes, and form.

Let's stay in that realm and I'll explain the most important design principles that you can incorporate when you're painting and designing your images.

Here are the main aspects of design principles that I'll be summarizing in this ebook:

- Composition
- Contrast & Framing
- Unity & Harmony
- Balance

Let's take a look at what these different principles of design really mean.



Composition



Composition is the way we arrange, or *compose*, all of the design elements that we talked about. This is where you start framing your picture and expressing your concept or story.

Composition can be quite subjective, but there are powerful guidelines you can use to ensure that you achieve a good composition. In this ebook, I've simplified these guidelines so you can use them and be "safe". Later on you can experiment and break these rules, but it's very important to understand the fundamentals of composition.

That's why we're going through these design principles.

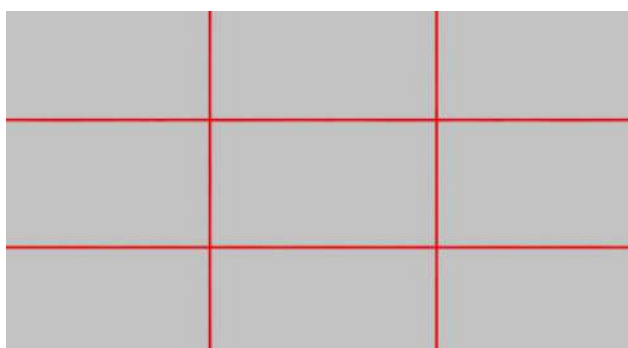
Now, there is an ocean of different aspects of composition. Entire books and courses have been written on this subject alone, but let me show you the most important guidelines that will help you express your stories and allow you to deliver your concepts to the audience in a very appealing way.

Rule of Thirds

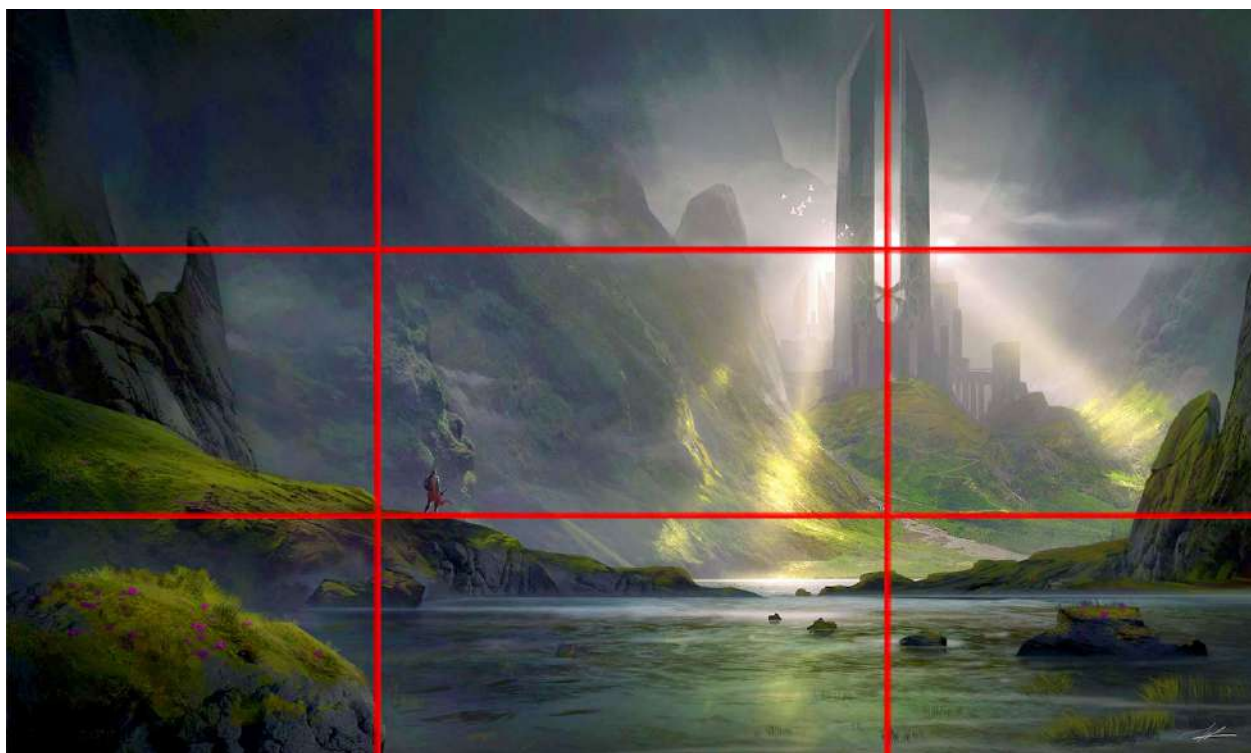
This one is a bit of a pickle. It's called a "rule", when it's not a rule at all — it's simply a guideline to help get you out of the center of the image. But who ever said the center is such a bad place?



So, what the rule of thirds does is it splits up the frame into 3 equal rows and 3 equal columns. Where the lines intersect, you can get some ideas on where to put interesting focal points, your horizon line and so on.



Here's an example where the grid is a little bit skewed, but gives you an idea:



The main focal points of this piece align somewhat with this grid. But honestly, there's no need to follow this too closely. It's just a simple grid to keep in mind if you want to get out of the center. I find that if I only use the rule of thirds, a lot of my paintings start looking bland and generic.

A much more interesting way of arranging your compositions is by utilizing **dynamic symmetry**, and that grid looks like this:



We'll look more at dynamic symmetry in my other courses and ebooks. For now, just know that you can break these rules a lot and still get very cool results.

Flow

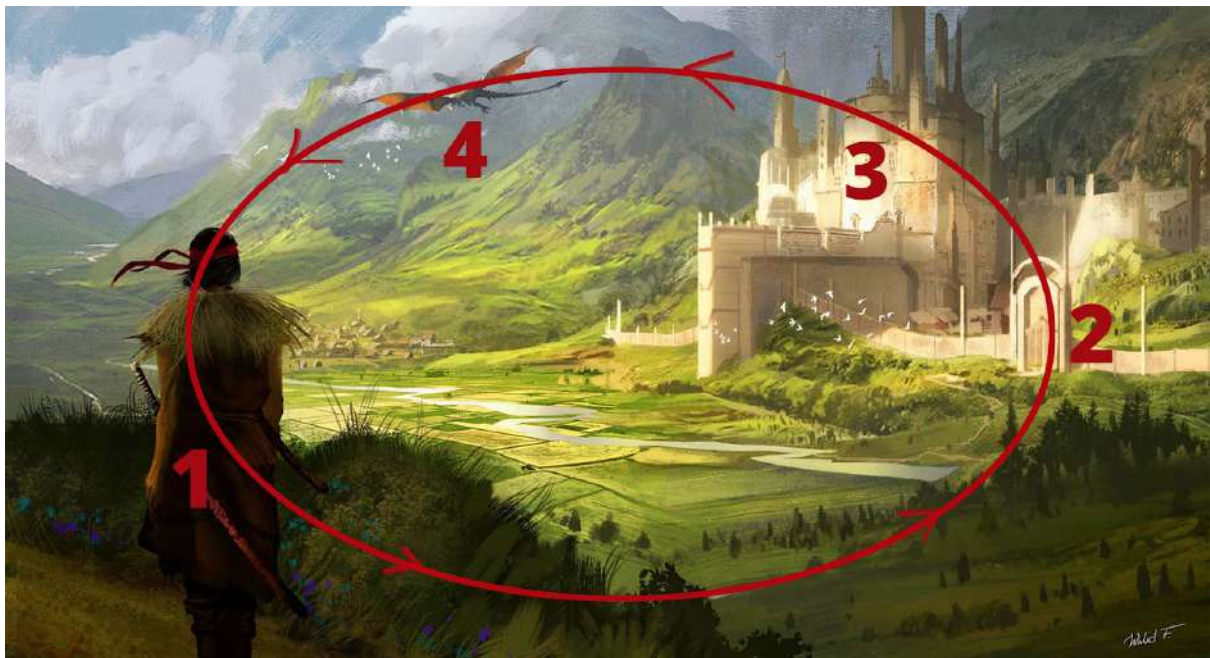
With this principle, you want to *lead the eye* by creating a path inside your composition that the viewer can follow, with a compelling story throughout. You can do this with varying angular lines or “zig-zagging” your way into the painting itself. It acts like a natural road.

You can also use circular flow. The viewer enters the image from somewhere outside your painting, and you lead them into the painting, around the paths you've created with focal points, angular lines, and so on, and then either out of the painting, or in a circular motion.

Here's another painting with a more circular flow, with some leading paths going into the distance (the river):



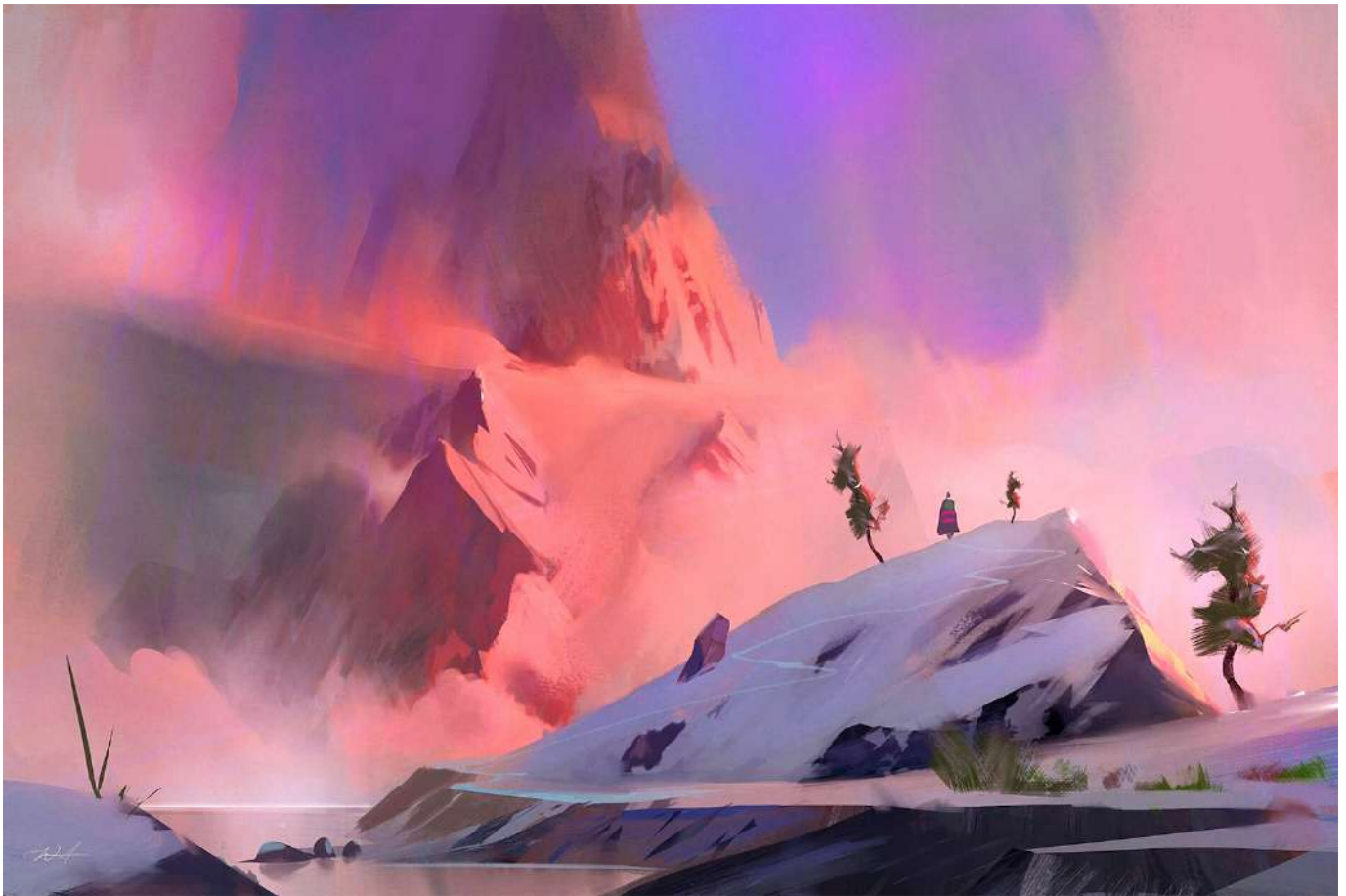
Here I've outlined the circular motion:



We start by seeing the human figure. The valley curves downwards and we spot the bright castle which leads us upwards into the dragon. The mountain slopes take us down again and into the first focal point.

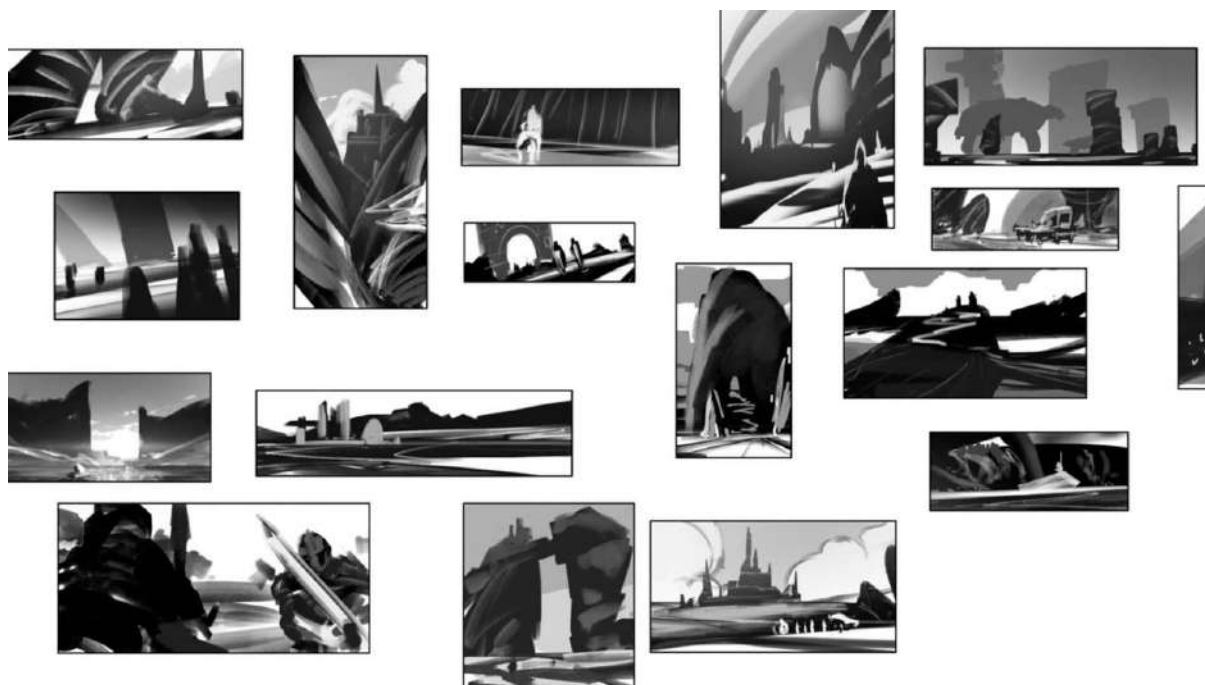
The river also creates a nice flow to let us escape out of the painting and into the distance. Thinking in this way will help you plot out your compositions in a deeper way, and captivate your audience much more than thinking about composition as an afterthought.

Here are some zig-zags:





Use these strategies to create motion in your own paintings!



Proportion (Big Medium Small)

When composing your paintings and creating ideas, you want to create some sort of proportional interest, and avoid creating everything equally in terms of size, position, spacing and so on.

So a great way to get some great-looking designs is to follow the **Big Medium Small principle**.

Aim for having 80% big shapes, 15% medium shapes, and then 5% small shapes here and there in your composition. This goes for negative space as well (the sky could be a big shape!). This will make your paintings look interesting and have great proportional relativity. They will be easier to design, as well.

Of course you can change this ratio, but it's a good estimation of what will look great in your paintings.

Take a look at the thumbnails I made above. See how there are about 80% big shapes, some medium shapes and then a bunch more small shapes everywhere?

Contrast & Framing

As you create your compositions, there are areas that you'll want to *frame* better so you can show them off. You also want your focal points to contrast against the surrounding to make them pop out more, and achieve greater dynamics in your pieces.

Contrast is created when you have two opposing levels of the same property. An example is how bright values contrast dark values, and how red contrasts green due to them being complementary colors (more on that later!). The most powerful way to achieve contrast is through the use of *values*. If you want a character in your scene to pop out and take more of the focus, you should put the character in such a place where there can be a high amount of contrast. An example could be a dark silhouette of a character in front of a brighter background – this creates contrast, and therefore draws the eye in.



Framing is really all about focal points and where you want the audience to look. If you create dark borders with a nice vignette, and have a bright and focused area, you can frame it by creating contrast around the focal area and really make it stand out.

You want to avoid having too many things framed and contrasted in your piece, as that can make it quite chaotic. See below how the foreground and background mountains nicely frames the castle, and creates a strong contrast at the same time?



Unity & Harmony

Creating unity and harmony within your scenes and your subjects is key in making things *look right*. Sometimes you can just see how something looks off in beginners' paintings, but you can't put your finger on it. This is often because a lot of elements in the scene don't share proper harmony and unity with each other.

In this design principle you basically have three major aspects used to create unity and harmony within your piece:

Perspective, Rhythm and Continuation.

Perspective

Perspective, and achieving unity and harmony with perspective, entails that everything should look like it belongs to the same scene, or sit within the same *perspective*.

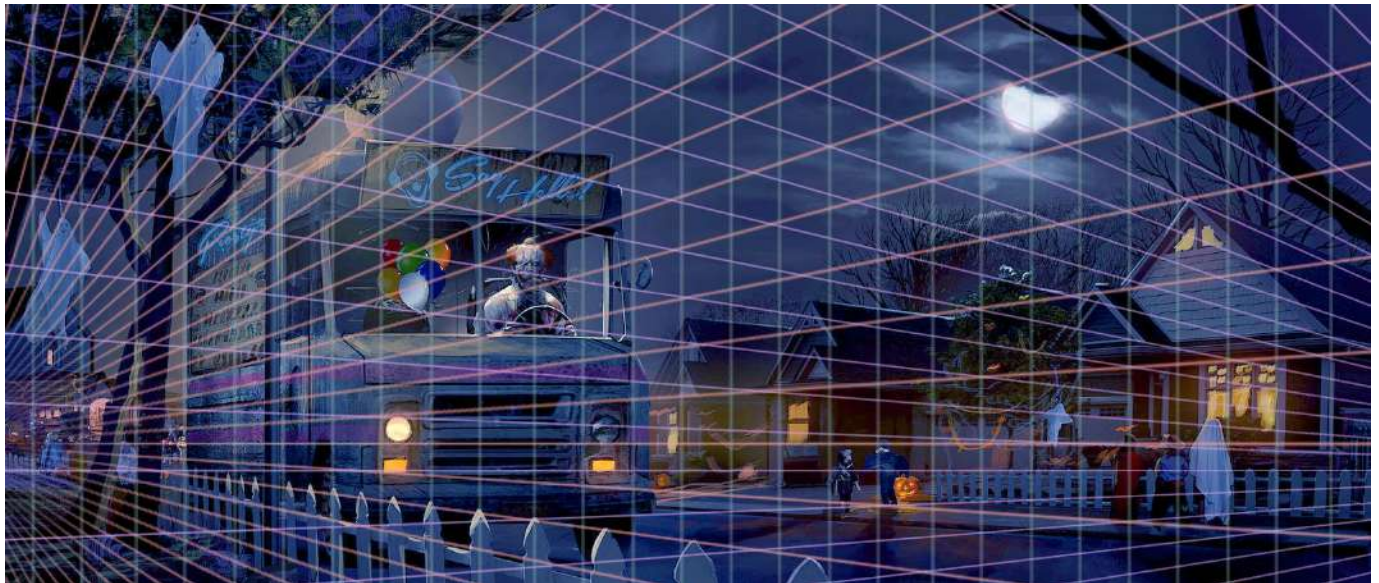
Take a look at this concept art I made for a horror movie project:



Everything aligns with the perspective that I chose here, from this camera angle, this amount of “zoom”, and so on.

This is where perspective grids come in handy. When things in the scene are in perspective, you will see their *lines* going into **vanishing points**. This is where you can have **1-point**, **2-point**, or **3-point perspective**.

If I paint a grid over this image, here’s the perspective we have, basically a 2-point perspective (two vanishing points, one to the left and one to the right).



Now, the van with the creepy clown is slightly angled towards us, so the van doesn't entirely line up with the perspective grid, but everything else does. So *not everything* has to line up with the perspective, but at least the general sense of it should be there.

That's why I think having a general sense of perspective, a *simplified* perspective, is much better — especially if you're not doing very complicated architectural work.

This is how perspective creates a *unity & harmony* within the entire picture.

Rhythm

When you think about *rhythm*, you think music. And this is exactly how you should view this design principle as well.

Having **rhythm** in your scene means having a certain *tempo* or a *beat*. This is achieved through **repeating** and **alternating patterns, shapes and forms**.

When you repeat a certain element in your scene, or a certain shape language, you create a sort of **visual tempo** that gives off a sense of unity. Take a look at this painting I did way back:



Notice how the rock spires and pointier angles of the rocks repeat through the image, creating a sense of unity. The ground earth plate cracks, the texture and the color also help create this rhythm in my piece. The spires and rocks get taller and taller, and creates a rising crescendo, much like a symphony, in this image.

Creating rhythm and repetition in your piece will make it look more dynamic and *real*, and will help it blend in with itself.

Continuation

Achieving *continuation* in your art simply means that you create a unity in a very similar way that rhythm and perspective does, with an emphasis on repetition. Your visual elements are **continually arranged** throughout your scenes or concepts.

Take a look at this character I painted for an indie game:



Notice how the angular and “directional” symbols and lines are arranged throughout his entire design. There’s a sense of sharpness, agility, and direction in this shape language, and this creates continuation throughout the design, which in itself creates harmony in the image!

Make sense? If not, don’t worry — it will become more and more intuitive as you create more art and follow through the other pillars of your journey to artistic success. Just know that it exists for now.

Balance

Creating balance within your image means ensuring that the *weight* of the visual elements balance out. Say you have one side of an image with a lot of weight, such as this:



It feels like it's going to tilt over to the left, and it's not very balanced. We can balance it by adding some big shapes to the other side, but without taking over the sharp square shape that captures our eyes:



This makes the image more balanced as a whole. This also applies to **directions and angles**. Sometimes a character, creature, scene, or object can look very tilted or angled so that it completely loses its balance. That's where you want to have counter-facing angles to



balance it out. Think of a tripod, and how all the legs support and balance each other.

Here is an example of how I achieved balance in a cover artwork using the rocks and mountains as counterweights and angled supports against the gorilla:



Another way to achieve balance is by having your elements symmetrically placed.

This invites more centrally-oriented compositions, like this painting I did a couple years back for a conceptual album by an alternative rock band:



To avoid making this piece too symmetrical and flat, I added in some continuous shapes that provide a rhythm and motion throughout the scene, as we looked at earlier.



Simplified Color Theory

Color theory can be very intimidating and tricky when you're unsure about what goes into it.

In this ebook, I have broken it down to a few simple aspects that you can take with you on your art journey.

An Easy Method to Choose Colors for Your Art

"How the heck do you get those colors?"

Asked an amazed Ole, looking at one of the quick speed paintings for my online course Cinematic Design:



Back in my cabin in Norway, I'm showing my friend, Ole, some of the stuff we go through in my Cinematic Design course. He's intrigued and asks me what goes into making paintings like these and if I can teach him. You know me... "Of course," I say!

Now, choosing colors can be a complicated and intimidating thing...

... IF you are just a regular beginner artist.

But you aren't, are you? You're here, reading this ebook and learning with me, which means you're already more awesome and willing to learn!

So let's break this subject down together and **simplify it**.

Here's an example I brought in from my Cinematic Design course. Check out this grayscale painting:



In just a moment, we'll give this piece some color.

For now, let's try to understand color a little bit more.

Understanding Color

Understanding how to use colors in your paintings is very much about what *mood* you're after and understanding how colors act *in relation* to each other.

Furthermore, light bounces around everywhere. It will have its own wavelengths (color) and will change as it bounces off of other materials, and so on.

When you have decided what overall feel you want to convey with your concept, you need to learn what goes hand in hand with which color schematic.

For example: **Blue**. Blue has a powerful, *deep* feeling to it. A dark winter evening. The blues. A cold arctic landscape. Desolate and abandoned. A moonlit portrait.

All these associations carry with them emotions that are attached to the color blue. We will use this color in our grayscale piece in just a bit, but before that, let's look at what some of the different **color harmonies** are and how we can use them.

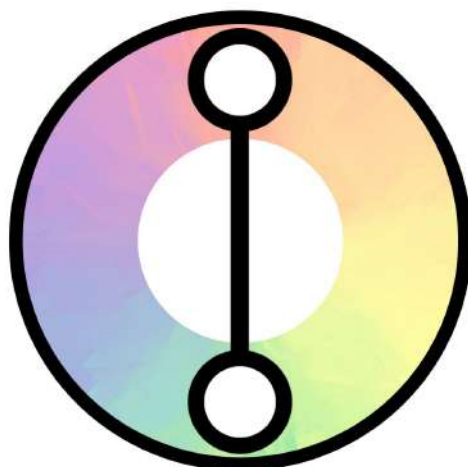
There are 5 main color harmonies that artists talk about, and these are all simply reference guidelines, just like the “rules” and principles of design.



A **monochromatic** color scheme simply means that there is one main hue, with different saturation levels and brightness values throughout the spectrum of that same hue.

I will go deeper into the discussion of complementary, analogous and split complementary harmonies because I believe these are the simplest to understand, and you can go very far by having a decent understanding of them.

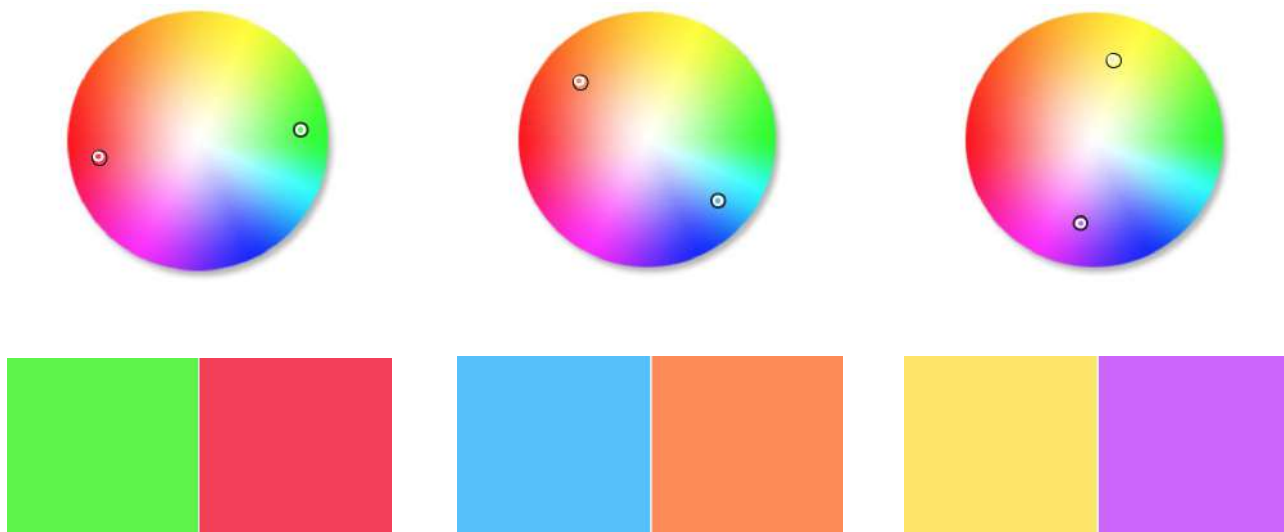
Complementary Colors



Complementary colors are colors that you could say are “opposite” one another on the color wheel. If you go to a color wheel and pick a color on one side, the complementary color will be the one opposite it at 180 degrees. Together, they make a great balancing pair of colors.

But beware — when using complementary colors, you need to make sure to not overdo it, as two complementary colors side by side will create a lot of contrast. If your painting is mostly green, then a little red goes a long way.

Look at these examples of complementary colors side by side:



Notice how they balance each other, or you might even say, “cancel” each other out. They’re perfect *complementary* colors.

This is why it’s important to **not** have them equally distributed, 50/50, in a painting - it would just be way too confusing for the viewer as to where to look, where the focal points are, and so on.

Instead, **use one main color**, and then sprinkle in its complementary color where you want to increase focus, create some nice color dynamics, and create a pleasing harmonious color scheme in your painting. In my opinion, this is a good practice to do with ALL color harmonies.

Also, to pull off a more realistic and natural looking color scheme, try using *less saturation overall* in your paintings, and avoid too saturated colors.

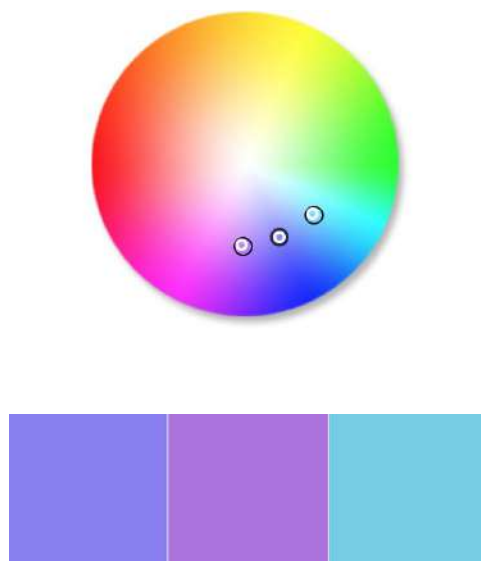
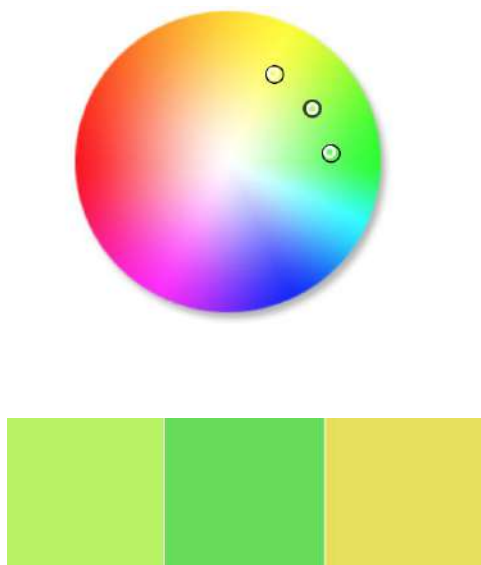
Analogous Colors



Analogous colors are colors that lie closer to each other in hue and on the color wheel. They work well together simply because they are close to each other's inherent hues.

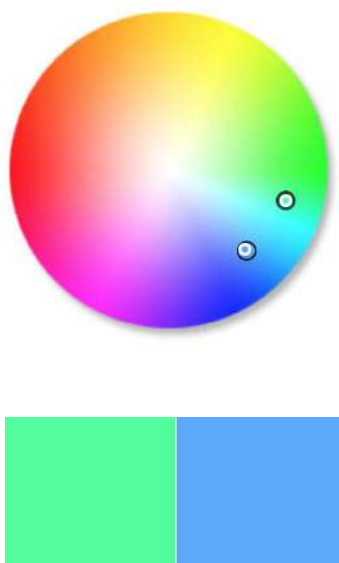
Say you're painting a field of grasses and bushes. Vegetation and grass fields are a great subject to practice painting with analogous colors, such as green, yellowish orange, brownish green, etc.

Take a look at these, closer **analogous color schemes**:



Notice how “easy” it is to look at them. They’re *analogous* to each other and work well together in an image.

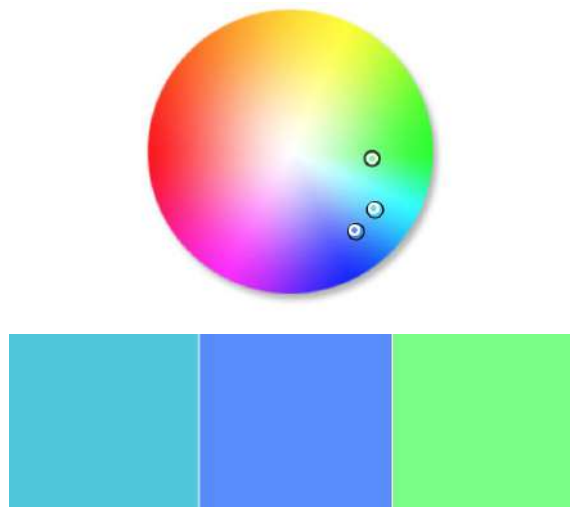
And by the way, it doesn't need to be 3 colors, it can be 2 or 5, as long as they're quite close to each other on the color spectrum.



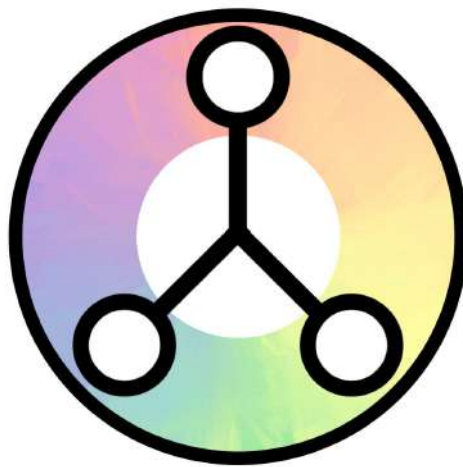
An example is this painting as you saw before:



This one has an icy blue, mixing in with turquoise and green, creating a nice analogous color harmony that works well within itself.



Split Complementary



This color harmony is one I use a lot in my paintings. I have a primary color, and then use the complementary of that, but somewhat split up, to give me a simple, harmonious and dynamic color scheme throughout the painting.

Here's an example of a split complementary color scheme:



While most of this scene is quite desaturated and muted, if we look at the hues, this painting has mainly a blueish green (the seas and that glowing

stuff), which is contrasted and harmonized with some oranges (light in the sky, fire and rocks) and purples (the sails):



There are also **triadic** and **tetradic** color harmonies, and they work in the same way as the others — they are simply colors used to balance each other out and achieve a nice harmony.

You can experiment with these on your own to see how they work for you.

Here are a couple of paintings and their general color schemes and harmonies:

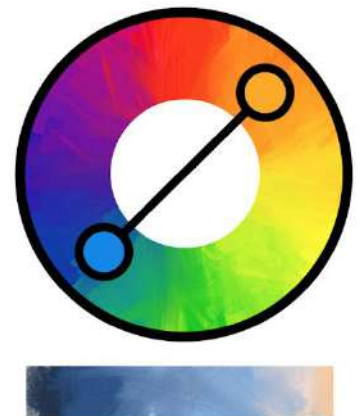
Tweaked tetradic/double complementary (closer to analogous):



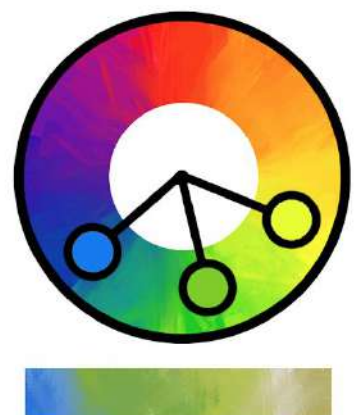
Monochromatic (only one main hue):



Complementary:



Analogous:



Going Back to Our Grayscale Piece

So now we know more about color harmonies, and what complementary, analogous, and harmonious colors are, and how we should distribute them to get a nice-looking colored painting, we can go ahead and start coloring in this grayscale piece that we looked at earlier.

Let's take our grayscale piece. We'll choose blue for our **primary color**. You can make most of your painting by starting with a muted blue. (In Photoshop you can do Ctrl/Cmd + B for **color balance**, and give the entire image a blue tint).

From this:



To this. Already we have some great mood started here.



Now you want to create some *color dynamics*, a varied and interesting **color scheme** with your blues. You want to achieve a harmonious color balance; a nice feeling color harmony.

Start by making some important focal areas a bit more interesting, a bit more saturated and stronger contrast. This will draw the eye straight there.

And we can also add a little bit of its complementary color where it makes sense.

So what's the main complementary color to this blue? Taking what we learned earlier, the main complement of this blue is yellowish orange.

Perhaps those streaks of light could be these warmer, yellowish orange colors we've chosen.

- QUICK TIP -

In Photoshop, use the brush and layer modes Linear Dodge, Overlay, Soft Light, or Color. See how areas in your paintings react to a touch of saturated colors.



Now we're looking quite good, aren't we?

I added a little bit of **gray** (gray in a mostly blue scene will actually look quite *warm*, more on this in a bit), and green to balance out the colors and make the scene look a little bit more natural. These colors are **analogous** and will work nicely with this piece. But for the mood I'm going for here, I want to keep it very muted and realistic.

This only took a couple of minutes to do, but we went from a grayscale painting to a nice, harmonious color piece. You can also start with color, and take it from there.

Choosing colors doesn't need to be very hard. It can actually be very simple if you know what to focus on. Let's say you wanted this to be a more exotic color scheme — let's say green!

Just start with green as the main color, figure out what your focal points are, and add a bit of variation to your main green color. The complement to green is purplish magenta, so you'll have a lovely color to play around with to create interesting areas.

Cool & Warm Colors

These are just what their names suggest: colors that feel **warm** or **cold**.

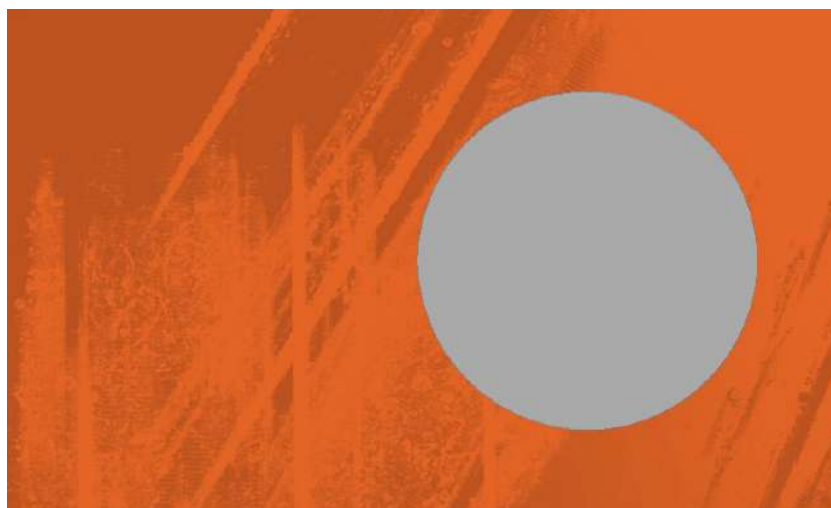
If you use a lot of blues, greens and turquoises, you'll achieve a cold mood. If you use fiery reds, oranges and yellows, it will feel warm.

Notice that these are complementary! That means having them in the same painting can create some great color harmony. Movie makers and photographers often do this in their scenes (for example, warm light from inside a house vs cold light from outside).

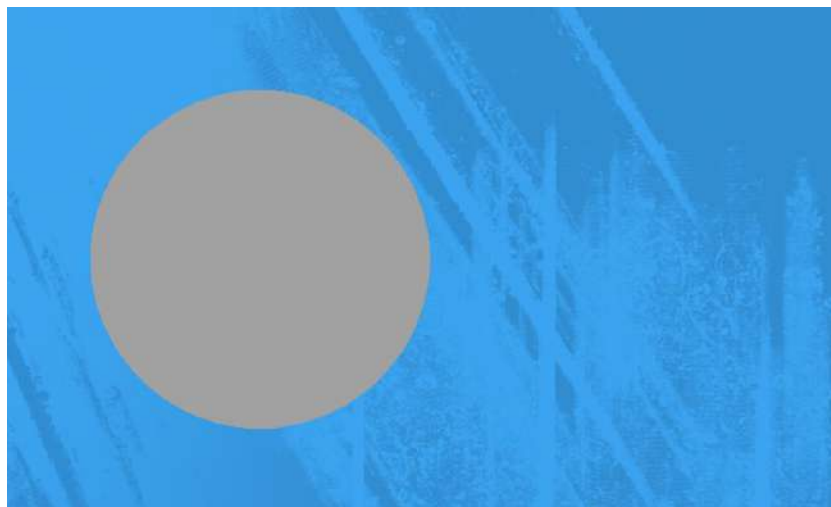
Here's one interesting observation that is important to note: **gray** in and of itself feels a little bit colder than neutral. **But**, having gray in tandem with a cool color makes it feel *warm* and have similar characteristics towards the cool color's complementary color.

And if you use gray with a warm color, you'll notice the gray feels colder.

Check out these examples. Look around a bit at the colored area, and then into the gray circle. Doesn't the gray look a little *blue* or *cold* in this example?



What about here? This feels more like the gray circle is actually warmer than the surrounding area. It feels a bit reddish, even.



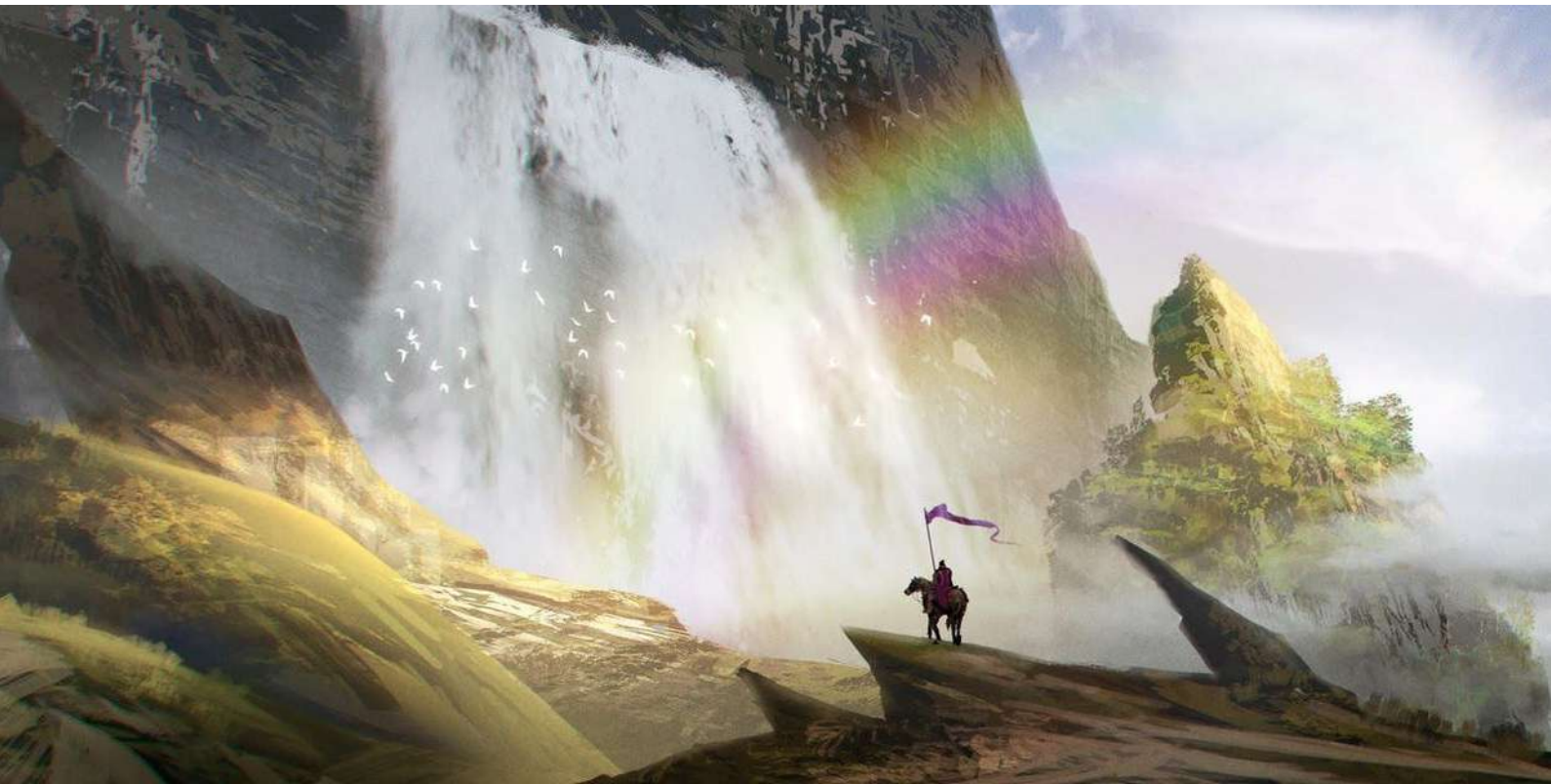
In your paintings, you can use grayish tones strategically to achieve a very subtle complementary feeling harmony. Sometimes, adding in gray in a reddish scene will make that gray look *greenish blue*. Try it out!

Having learned what some of the most important fundamentals are, we can now move on to the second pillar of our art journey!





Pillar 2: Create, Create, Create!



Now that you have the most important pillar set in the earth of your art foundation, it's time to **just create**.

Using the lessons you learned from studying the fundamentals and trying out all of the different principles, arranging elements, creating flow and getting good proportions and all of that, you have to simply put it into practice now and just paint. And while you may want to think about every single aspect of the painting as you go, this will only hinder you. These different aspects are a great thing to study, but without enough **pen mileage** — that is, how many “miles” you’ve drawn and painted — it makes little difference.

This is why I have *simplified* these fundamentals and made them easy to understand — so that you don’t have to *think* too much as you create.

Remember when you were eight years old, and you sat in your childhood room drawing with your colored pencils and you just *drew* stuff?

You were in a **flow state**.

Time was irrelevant. You didn't even notice it. You simply painted or drew the images you had in your mind, with no expectations of having it turn out a certain way.

And boy, were you proud when you finished! You couldn't wait to show Mom!

That was me, anyway. And I envy my old self — completely lacking all preconceptions and judgments of what creation *should* be like, and being able to just draw and paint for the sake of having fun.

I want you to go back to that state, and paint simply because it's fun and rewarding. That's why we're doing all of this, after all — because it's such a blast, and such a unique feeling to have created an image, a concept, or a story, *out of thin air*.

So let's all get back to that, shall we?



Just Paint

I've named this part "Just Paint" because this sentiment illustrates a vital point I want to convey to all my students: you should give up all preconceptions of what you might *think* you need to be, and refocus on what you *want* to be and to be able to do.

When you give up all judgments and return to the awesome reality that painting is so much fun, you enter a mysterious state known as *flow*, where time disappears and you actually *become* the art and the process of creating it.

Entering this state will make practicing much easier (more on that later!), and will help you to put in the practice time needed in order to reach new heights.

It doesn't matter if you're amazingly talented, or if you think that you lack talent altogether. The work of the greatest geniuses of all time can all be attributed to their dedication and their proper practice.

Beethoven's motto was:

"One line of music each day."

... so that he would never forget the importance of putting in the time to enhance his skills and continually improve.

Now Beethoven was one of a kind, but what truly set him apart from many of the other composers at that time was the sheer amount of practice he put into his music.

Most beginner artists face the issue of not being happy with their work, or becoming frustrated and putting their art on the shelf.

It's my mission to see improvement in your concepts and artworks, and that can only happen if you *commit*. Put in the practice and do the work!

So when I say “just paint”, it goes way beyond just this ebook. Even after you've read it, I want you to experiment and just keep painting. You will become better and better.

Remember: Practice Makes Progress.

It doesn't make perfect — there's no such thing — you simply *progress*. The masters are masterful because they always carry with them a beginner's mind.

So don't overthink this. We're just having fun and creating concepts.

And once you learn to practice properly and become better and better, eventually you'll find that people want to hire you for your art — and trust me, that's a fantastic feeling.

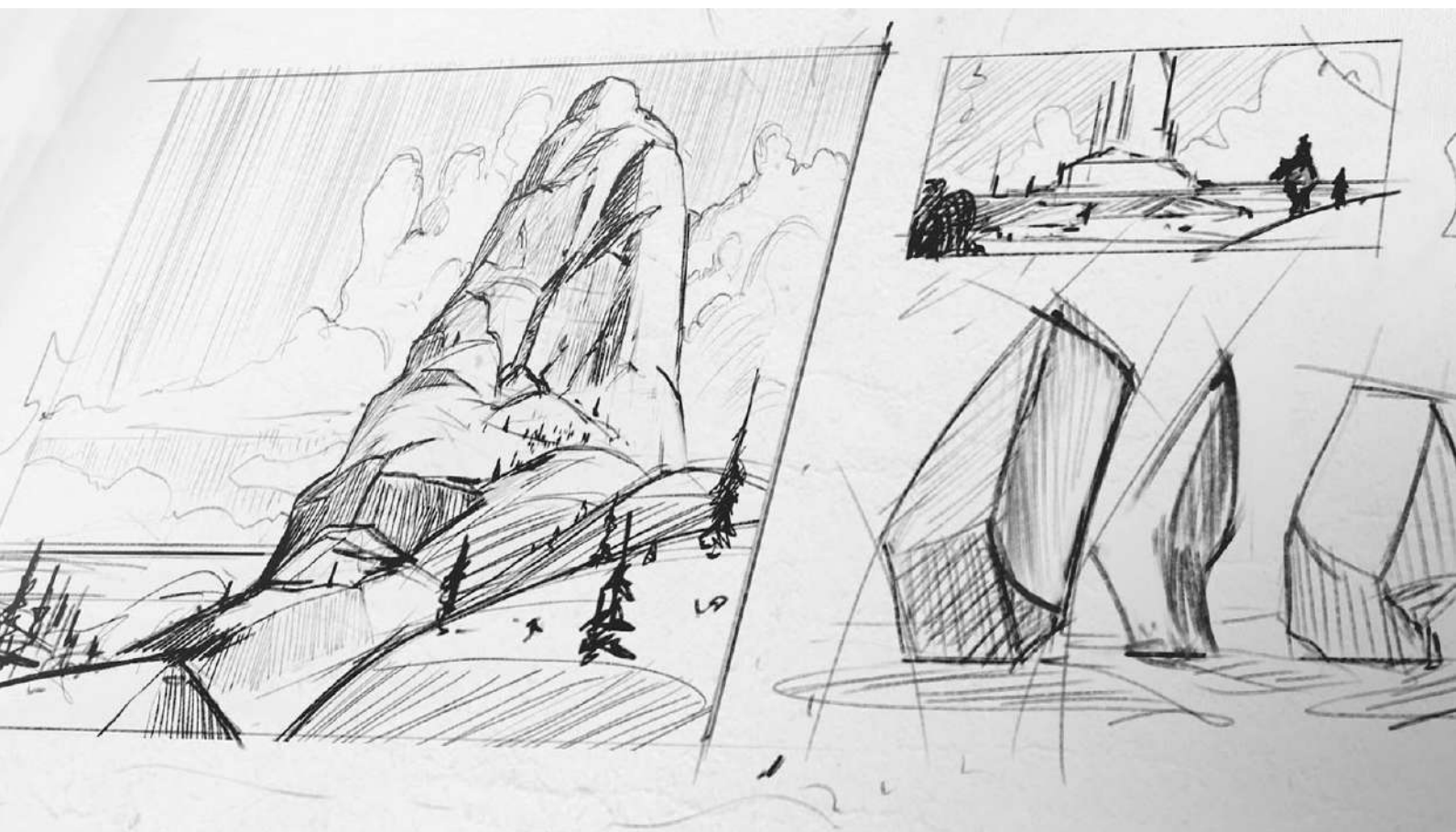
I still remember the first time I got paid for my digital painting many years ago. It wasn't a great painting, but the client liked it, and I had made money from my own creation — I finally understood that it's possible to improve and make a living off of my art.

So, just put in the time, don't worry about the results, enjoy the ride, and just paint!





Pillar 3: Studies & Subjects



Now you're well on your way to improving as an artist, implementing the proper fundamental knowledge you've acquired, creating artworks, and increasing your pen mileage. It's time to double down on what really elevates your skills to the next level: **studies**.

One of the most important points I talk about in all of my educational material is how we can use references to truly become awesome artists.

Studies are my absolute favorite way of improving as an artist. Creating a study involves using references and extracting the most out of them for your own bank of knowledge or **visual library**.

A visual library is a mental collection of all the references you've gathered throughout all your time as an artist (and through just living!). As you're painting and designing, your visual library helps to speed things up, and helps you come up with better design choices.

Referencing is what you do when you are taking another image, object or scene and using it as a reference for your own painting.

You can reference human anatomy and proportions, trees and plants, landscapes, architecture, or even other paintings and concepts.

Here's an analogy: I was sitting in my garage, trying to get the electrical wiring on my motorbike all fixed up. I was thinking about how I can reference a fully functioning electrical system, and build my own so that it works perfectly. Referencing other electrical systems has so far proven to be indispensable in getting this thing on the road again.

One thing I hear a lot, unfortunately, is that referencing is basically just cheating, because you're not doing anything original — just "stealing".

No, no, no!

I believe this is completely false and backwards. The best creatives in any field — be it music, art, philosophy or science — have all referenced their predecessors in their respective fields.

Our gift to humanity, Albert Einstein, stood on the shoulders of Newton. My hero in landscape painting, Albert Bierstadt, took reference from his mentors in the Hudson River School, and from nature itself. The great

emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius sculpted his Meditations from the great teachings of Epictetus. The list is endless.

We all need to use referencing in one way or another, and we all do it — consciously and subconsciously. Realize that early on, and let go of the stigma that by referencing someone else, you'll somehow "lose" your own style or personality. On the contrary — it will *strengthen* your own style, and give you more solid ground to stand on!

Look at the paintings and images you love and reference them for moods and compositions. Understand what it is that makes them great. If you want to paint big golem-like creatures made out of rock, study how rocks look and behave, what textures they have, and look at concept art of the Hulk, earth elementals in games like World of Warcraft, or any of your favorite big, bulky characters.

This way you can put several references together, and begin making your own character. If you want to paint a fantasy world with a reddish, desert-like environment, study the Southwest deserts in the USA, or images of Mars from NASA. Reference those pictures!

This will help you build up a visual library, which is extremely important to develop further as an artist. If you've referenced a desert a bunch of times and feel comfortable painting deserts, the next time you're painting a desert you won't need a reference, but will be able to pull the information out of your own mental visual library — Isn't that awesome?

So the next time you want to create some cool concept or painting, and you're not 100% sure about what direction you should go, or if you simply want to improve the look of certain subjects — use references.

It will help you tremendously in the long run.

Using References to Create Studies

While references are awesome to use for your personal paintings, concepts and ideas, they are also a fantastic aid for improving your overall skill.

If you want to improve your knowledge of color, and learn how to build up a nice-looking, realistic color scheme, you can pick a reference with great colors and **study** it. Paint it how you see it and figure out how to achieve that result. Make a proper effort to figure out what it is you're seeing, and why you like it so much.

Does it have to be exactly the same, down to the last detail? Not at all. When doing studies, you are practicing specific aspects of painting and design.



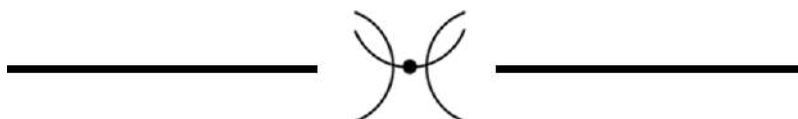
Image taken by Ricardo Gomez Angel

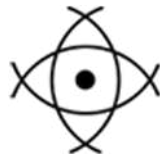
Aspects and subject recommendations to study:

- Color Harmony
- Light & Shadow
- Composition
- Anatomy
- Expressions
- Textures
- Entire paintings
- Entire scenes from photos
- Scenes from real life (Plein Air)

There are tons of other aspects and subjects that you can study. When you look at beautiful paintings, figure out *what* it is that makes them so beautiful. Is it all of the different aspects? Is it, perhaps, the striking colors? Can you *simplify* it?

The **only good way** to truly acquire the knowledge of what makes your references so awesome, to absorb it into the very marrow of your bones, and to achieve that in your own paintings, is to **study it!**





Pillar 4: New Techniques



Now you have a basic grasp of the simplified fundamentals, you're chugging along and creating art and doing studies and everything is awesome!

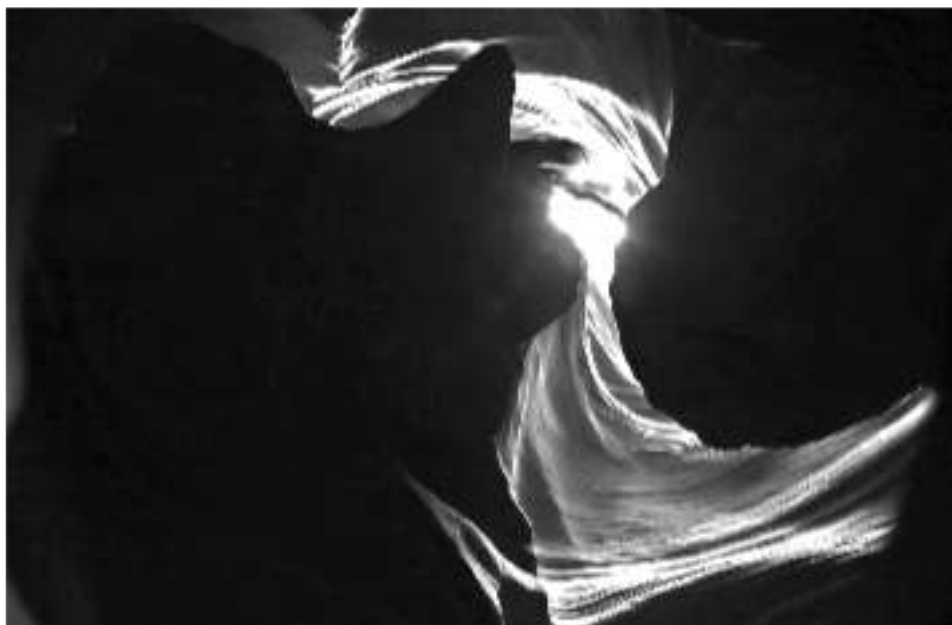
So how do you continue improving? You want to continue growing your skills and create even more stunning artworks. At this point, I want to introduce the fourth pillar of your pathway to success: **new techniques**.

This is where you learn new ways of building up your scenes; tools you haven't tried before, methods that get you out of the boring and repetitive or the same old, same old.

As you try out more methods and techniques, your brain gradually starts to connect everything and finds new ways of creating art. You'll understand how to use the graphite pencil better, because you have been so used to sketching with it digitally. Your sense of color will improve, and you'll use different methods, like the S3 Method I'll show you in just a bit, to generate even more interesting ideas and step outside your comfort zone.

It's really exciting to be learning and adopting new and interesting techniques and methods. This is something that never ends — you'll keep acquiring new ways of creating art, new functionalities, software, and workflow — it all reinforces itself and helps to arm you with the techniques you'll need to turn your ideas into beautiful, finished paintings.

I'll show you one of the methods I love to incorporate when I want to develop a thumbnail or idea into a finished painting quite quickly. But before that, I'll show you how I generate ideas very quickly, in a liberating and fun way. This is **The Abstract Way**.



The Abstract Way

Once you realize how **everything visual** is simply made up of shapes, forms and the other design elements we discussed earlier, you'll learn how to break things down and see the world in a deeper way.

We might think that we're seeing something unique or something that falls outside the 5 design elements I showed you earlier (shape, form, depth, texture and color), but there are no exceptions.

So how can we use this to our advantage? Our brain *loves* making sense of shapes and silhouettes that our eyes see. We can do that through a process I call The Abstract Way.

This involves working with **abstractions** to create art thumbnails and generate ideas very quickly. This type of workflow heavily encourages experimentation and shape exploration, which is one of the reasons I love it and recommend it to my students.

Let me show you an example of how powerful the **eye of your brain** is.

The Woman Of The Canyons

Pareidolia. Weird word, huh? This is the scientific name for seeing something in shapes that aren't actually there. When you look at clouds and see a hippo, or you see strange faces on the surface of Mars, your brain is interpreting whatever it can visually and tries to make sense of it. We can use this to our advantage.

As I was riding a motorcycle on my desert journey through the American Southwest, I made a stop in Page, Arizona.

In Page, there are some gorgeous natural Navajo sandstone slot canyon formations. I stopped at the Lower Antelope Canyon to explore.

When I enter this alien world of united sand and stone, this is what I see...

Side-note: It's amazing how without catastrophic cascading flash floods and deluges of sand and force, natural beauty like this would never exist. Makes you think, huh?

Anyway, I was just *seeing* things everywhere I looked. A different angle gave me a different abstract shape that I perceived in my head.

Do you see *her*?

Let's look again at the photo I took. Now do you see her?

Or perhaps you see something else. At any rate, I think this is something that is very important for us artists to learn and practice — seeing things in abstract shapes and forms, learning *how to see*. Using pareidolia to our advantage.



With this in mind, I created a technique that I call The Abstract Way.

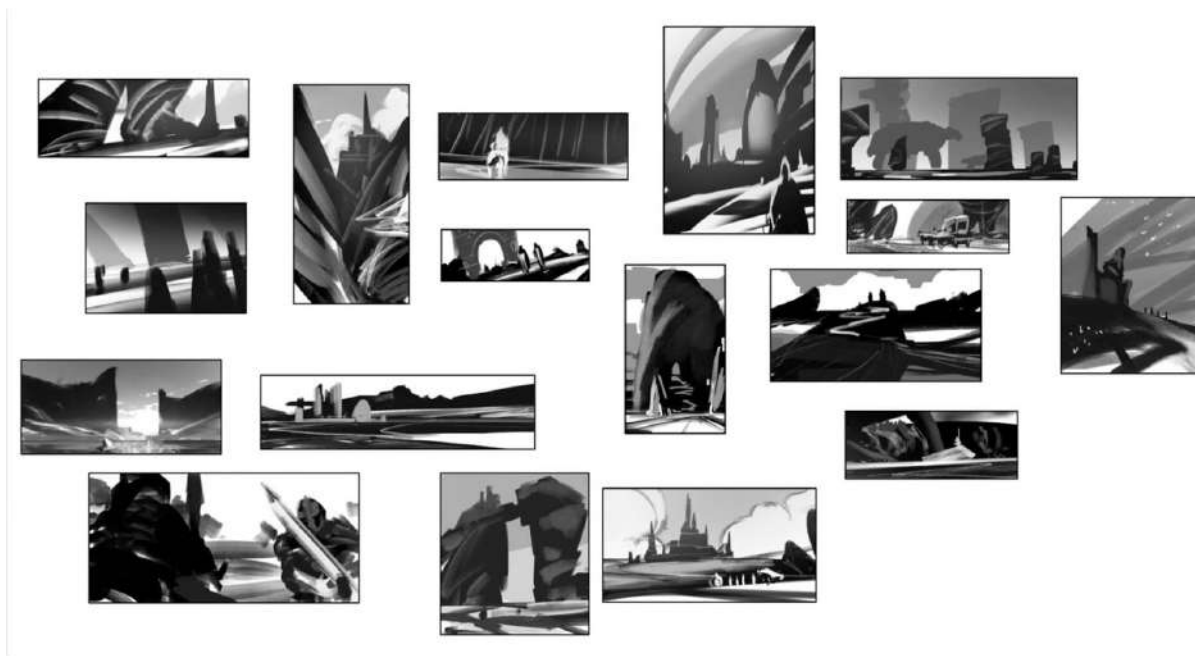
It's a process of generating a ton of ideas quickly from abstract shapes, and finding a way to start your paintings — sketches, basically.

It goes like this:

1. Start by putting down a few marks with some direction (not completely random), following the simplified design principles that we learned.
2. In these shapes, you will start to see things (no you're not crazy, you're an artist!). That triangular shape starts looking like a pyramidal structure, or a mountain. The flowing lines look like a river defying gravity, and so on — you get the idea!



3. Create a bunch of these thumbnail sketches with The Abstract Way.



4. Take one of those sketches and turn it into a beautiful finished painting, as we'll look at in the next technique, The S3 Method.



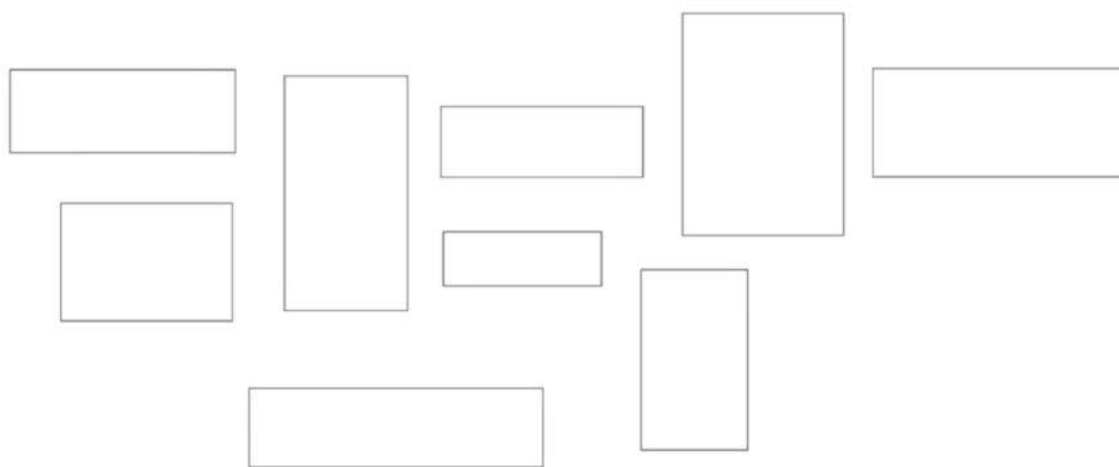
So next time you're looking at the shapes around you, give them an extra look and see if you can see something else.

Even negative space can provide lots of interesting ideas!

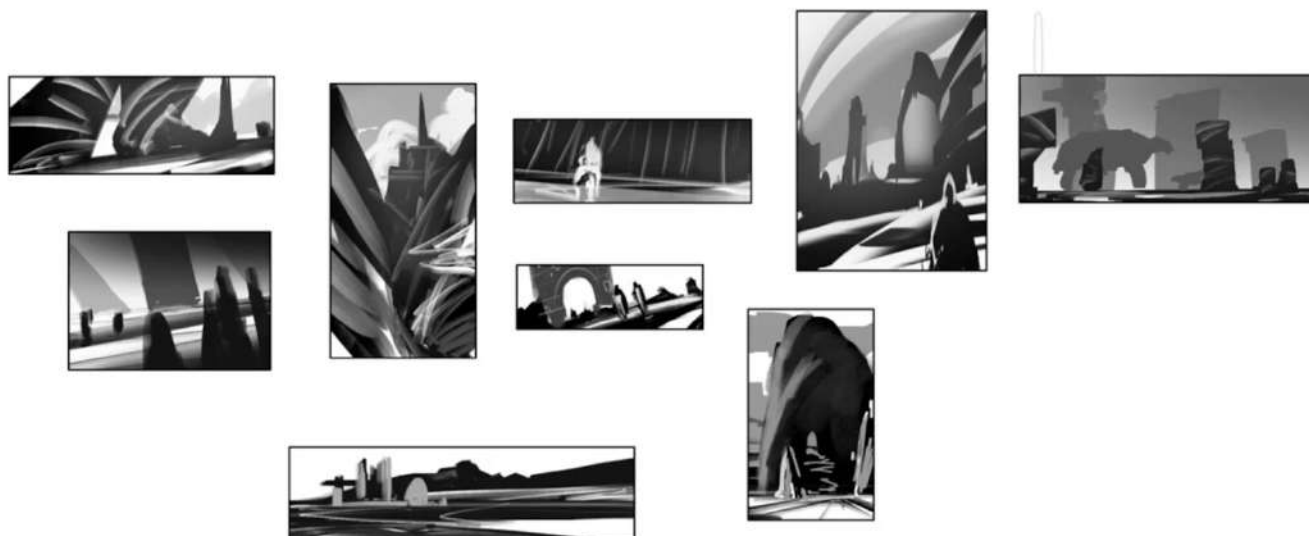
Do you see the **sea horse** here?

Everywhere around us, there are tons of abstract shapes, forms and textures, that combine to tell us what kind of object or thing it is. So in this early stage of painting, we want to create **abstractions** — just generate ideas quickly to achieve some direction for our painting. This is key for creating good paintings — it's very rare that you will know immediately how a painting will look even before you start, and then just create an exact version of that. A lot of this stuff is purely *happy accidents*.

To start, we can create a random grid (you can use a mask in Photoshop).



Then we can start painting. Not randomly, but while *keeping the design principles in mind*. Just painting randomly will often not have great results.. Once we have a bunch of thumbnails, we can take the ones we like the most to the next level.



The point of this exercise is to realize that shapes, shape language and composition are some of the most important aspects of art.

The Abstract Way is just one method, or technique, that allows you to explore composition and exercise your ability to see stories and concepts using the design element of shape.

You definitely don't have to start using the abstract way every time you make a new painting.

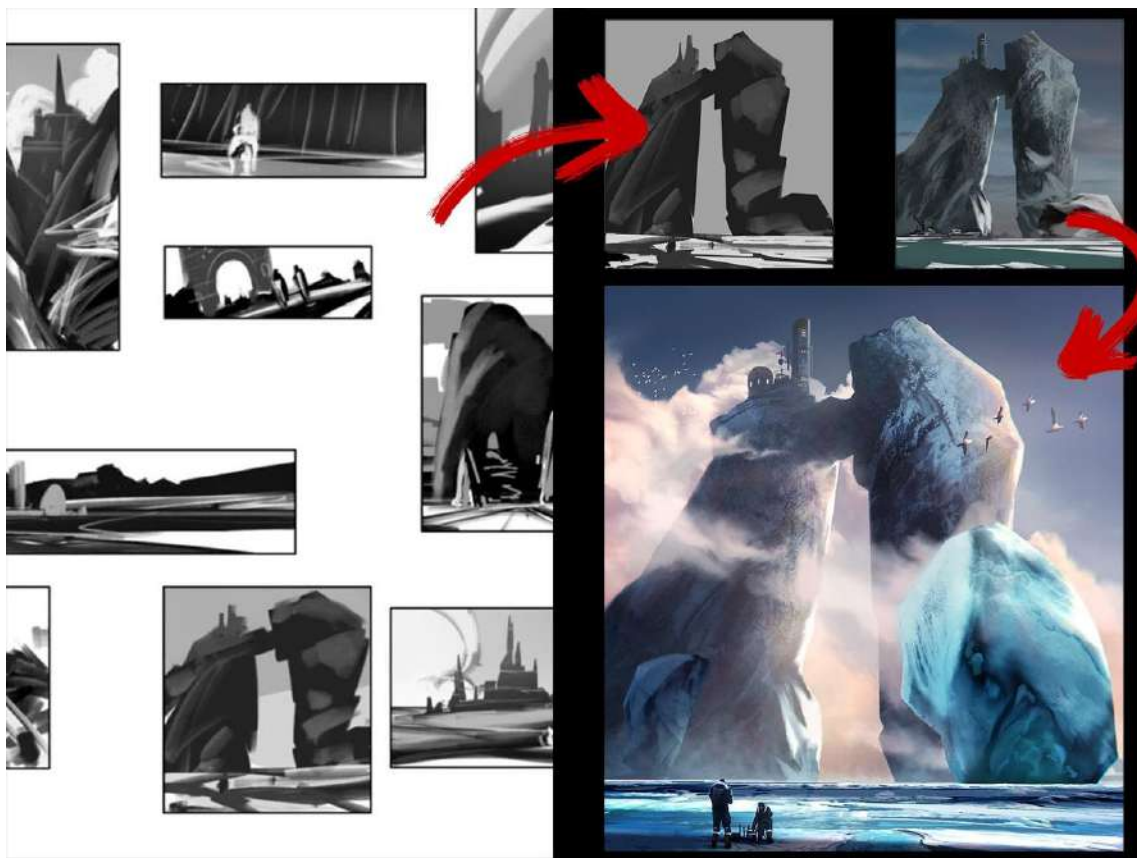
It's more about **idea generation** — freeing your creative mind, and allowing you to practice your fundamental knowledge of design and find some great looking shapes and compositions.

Sometimes I start with a sketch as well, using a pencil-like brush on Photoshop, or I'll just go straight into painting with colors immediately and cut out the whole thumbnail stage. You don't always have to start out with the Abstract Way. This is just one way to get you to boil down your concepts and ideas into simple shapes and compositions, to explore proportion, flow, balance, repetition, and so on.

So now that you understand that, you will have a much easier and more powerful way to create your art in any way you want. So just do your own thing!

Don't worry about how much time it takes. Start with a sketch! Start painting directly! Whatever will get you going. As long as you don't forget the fundamentals, and why we practice them using The Abstract Way.

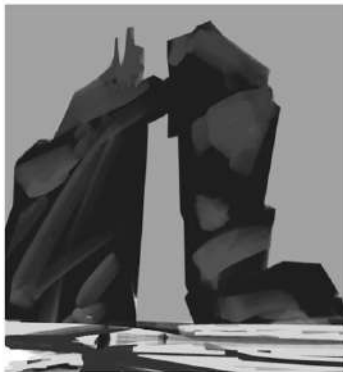
The S3 Method



Now we will look at how to take our more abstract shapes and thumbnails and turn them into beautiful finished paintings!

Throughout my years as an artist, I have developed certain methods and personal workflows to guide this process. Here is a method I created that allows you to break down the process of painting in three major steps. I call it **The S3 Method**.

Shape.



Sculpt.



Season.



Imagine a chef. The chef starts the cooking process with some preparation of the main ingredients.

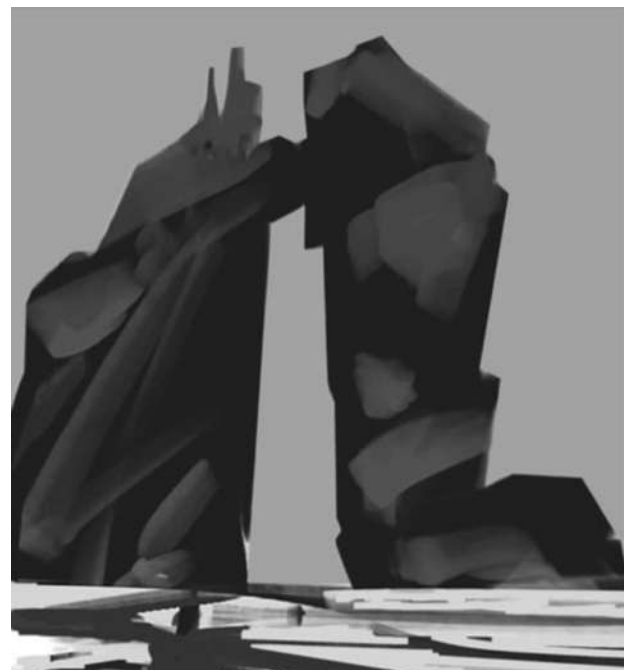
Next up is the cooking techniques; using heat, and different tools and methods to develop the dish. Lastly, the seasoning comes in, and the finalization of the dish. I want you to think in these terms as an artist as well.

Let's look at the different stages.

1. Shape

The way this works is that you start your painting by shaping it. You block out big shapes and forms, and establish a decent composition.

This will set the foundation for the rest of your painting and make it easy to see the path going from idea to finished concept artwork.



2. Sculpt

When you're happy with your foundation, you can start adding some lighting, forms, color. In this stage, you clean it up more and develop it further. You *sculpt* your painting into something more established, and begin playing around with it and trying different things to see what works best.

Imagine a clay sculptor. She starts by using big blocks and masses of clay, roughly in the shape of the final sculpture.

Then she starts cutting away the clay here and there, adding some smaller blobs, and simply sculpting it into a more established state.



3. Season

When you are happy with your painting so far, you start *seasoning* it.

You add details where your focal points are, sparks of light here and there, render out the hair of that knight, and touch up the painting with more photo textures. Final color corrections, small details and finalization takes place here.



You will spend most of your time between the Sculpt stage and the Season stage, even if the first stage is arguably the most important!

- QUICK TIP -

I jump around a lot between the different stages to see if I can do something even better, or find a better composition.

There's nothing wrong with that, as long as you realize that having a good foundation in the beginning will determine how successful you'll be with the artwork as a whole in the end.

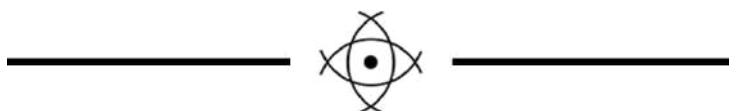
Other Techniques

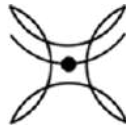
It would take many more ebooks to cover all the techniques that I can teach you and that you can try out, but for now, let's just stick to the basics.

Take some time to become comfortable with using Photoshop and its many amazing tools and functionalities. If you want to work with more traditional mediums, make them like second nature. Focus on the basics — the very simple basics. As you adopt all of these tools and software, you will start to realize just how many different amazing techniques you can pull off, and you can start developing your very own workflow.

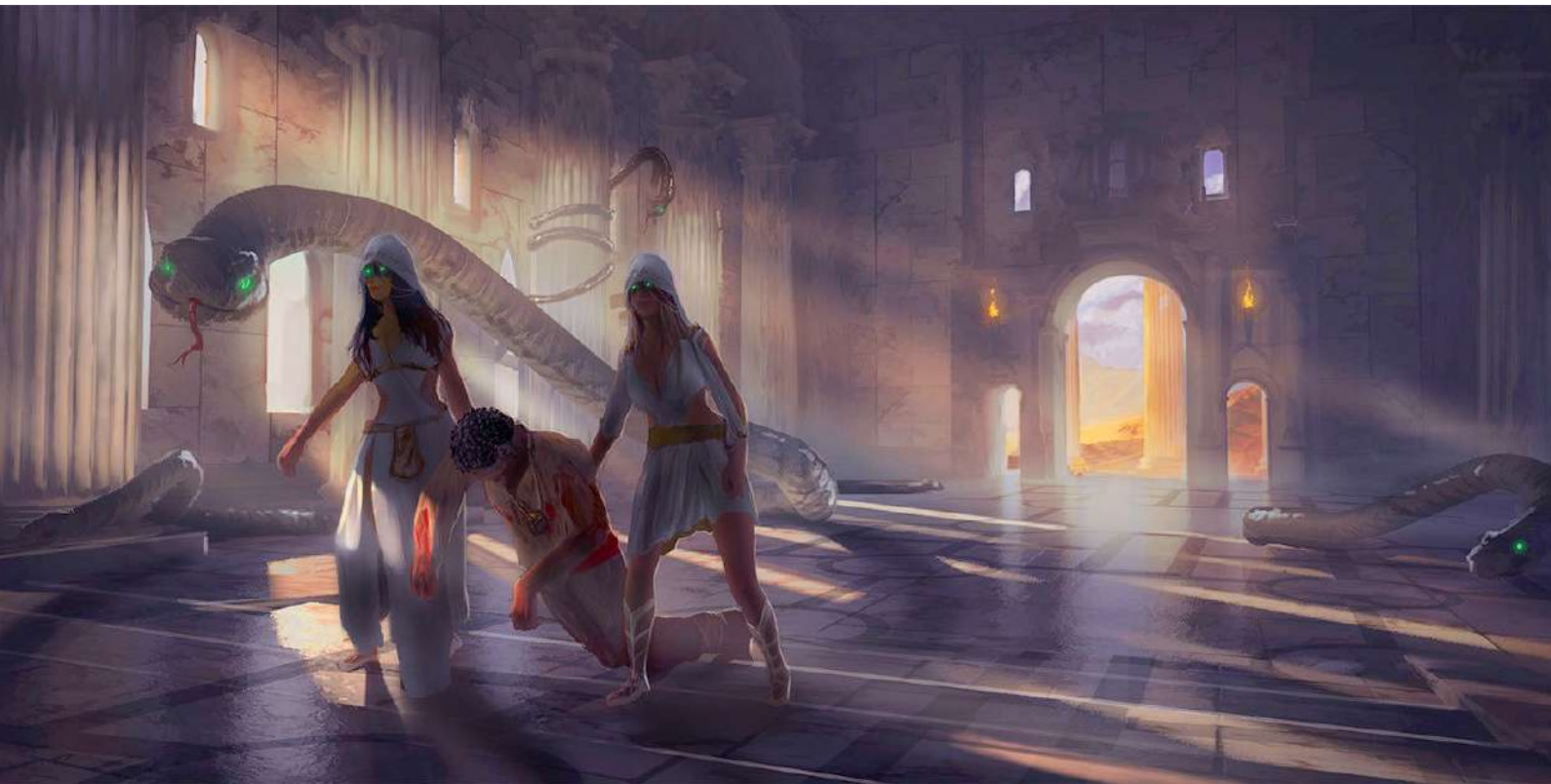
We are all different, so it makes sense that our workflows will be different. What works best for me might not work for you. This is why I only presented you with the specific method of The Abstract Way in the fourth pillar, because the main mentality and essence of it permeates all art. You simply want to learn how to see, and how to combine everything you learn throughout your art journey.

This takes us to the next and final pillar: **Never Stop Learning.**





Pillar 5: Never Stop Learning



At this point, you have four strong pillars supporting your art progress:

- You're doubling down on your **fundamentals** and familiarizing yourself with them.
- You're **creating** more and more art, increasing your pen mileage and your body of work.
- You're creating **painting studies** of specific subjects and imagery using references.
- You're learning **new techniques and methods** that add to your arsenal of art creation.

And this all goes back to reinforcing your fundamentals. And as you get better and better, you'll create more and more and want to make even more studies. You start stockpiling your arsenal with further techniques and methods. It's an amazing positive upward spiral from here on out!

So then, what's next?

Well, this alone will keep you on autopilot, really. Put in the work, and you will continue to improve more and more. You'll find more joy in it as well, because you're cranking out such great results, other people are liking it a lot, you're inspiring others around you and you might even be acquiring more clients and gigs.

Here is where you need to tread carefully as you start to become really good.

A Beginner's Mind

Let me talk about something that lies close to my heart. We can all agree that learning a new skill is awesome. But you want to know what's even more awesome and powerful? Learning *how to learn*. Sounds a bit silly, but this sentiment is with me in everything I do, and it's what allows me to examine a subject or skill, adopt it, learn it, and even master it, be it art, music, engineering, gymnastics, language — anything.

Having this skill will not only help you reach your art goals, but will also help you learn anything else you want.

This ebook has been all about empowering your mind to have a strong viewpoint and giving you a starting-ground to learn and improve as an artist, with the added simplified fundamentals and a powerful method to get you going.

I'm sure you agree with me when I say that getting really good at something requires time and practice. You might look at professional art and think, "Ugh,

how can I make amazing art like that?” It seems so far away and impossible, and just too much hard work.

Well, let me tell you — it’s not impossible, and you definitely don’t need to put all that much time into it to become really good. Of course you need to practice and put the necessary time into improving, but you can get there quicker and easier, while having a lot of fun.

So how do you learn? Well, it turns out that you can become great at painting by, of course practice, but primarily by developing a *habit*.

Motivation is what gets you started; habit is what keeps you going.

And this is what I want to teach you in this lesson. It’s not a technique or life hack, but rather a mindset that will stick with you, and empower you in anything you want to learn, and in this case — concept art.

So before we get into all the cool painting methods, techniques and workflows in this course, there is an incredibly important mindset I want you to learn. It’s something I’ve borrowed from, believe it or not, Zen Buddhism.

One of Zen’s elemental pillar stones is to always have what is known as “**a beginner’s mind**”. This entails always being open and emptying the mind of preconceptions. It means not judging everything, being OK with failing, and having an eagerness towards learning new things, just like a beginner should.

So be open, ready to learn new things, and be OK with not achieving great results the first time around.

FAST

Now here's something I learned a while back from a course on memory. To learn a new skill quickly, I want you to remember these four letters:

F - Forget

A - Action

S - State

T - Teach

The F stands for **Forget**. Yep, you're going to forget what you already know about the skill or subject. This goes back to the beginner's mind I talked about — start by forgetting what you already know, be ready to learn new things, and clear your mind so that you can focus on learning the good stuff.

A stands for **Action**. Be active and do the practice. Don't just watch tutorials and quick mini-courses — those won't give you as much as actually *doing*. So get active, start painting, ask questions, be active in the art community, and watch your skills reach new heights.

S stands for **State**. When you're learning how to paint, being in a good state of mind is key. Listen to some good music, laugh with some friends on a chat, grab some coffee or tea and make yourself comfortable, get yourself in a good mood. Find out what makes YOU happy and motivated to paint. Look at some cool artworks and get excited, knowing that you too will be able to do that. *You* control your own state, and being in a good state is instrumental in learning new things.

And finally the T stands for **Teach**. If you're learning art, learn it so that you can teach it to others, because only then will you truly pay attention and make an effort to understand it. This has helped me tremendously when learning

art. Each time I learned something new, I wanted to share it with my art colleagues and friends, and I got them excited too, even if they aren't artists themselves. So learn to teach, and show others what you've learned!

FAST: Forget, Action, State and Teach. This is how you learn fast, and reach new heights in your abilities more quickly than before. Forget what you know, adopt a beginner's mind, take action to learn new things while asking questions and trying different techniques and methods, put yourself in a good state and, finally, teach what you know to others.

Remember this and you'll have one of the most powerful mindsets to accelerate your learning of any skill — including painting great-looking concept art.



The 7-Step Method To Practicing Art

Let's look at a simple method for practicing art. But first, we need to understand why we practice in a certain way, to reach our goals quicker and have more fun while doing it.

Remember what I said at the beginning of this ebook? Motivation is what gets you started, habit is what keeps you going. So let's look into how to build a habit of practicing art. The key here lies in something known as **muscle memory**. I know, I know, it's not art, but it's essential to understand so that we can improve as artists. Let's look at an example to drive this point home.

Imagine you're learning how to whistle. So you start shaping your mouth into weird forms and blowing air through it. You try to figure out the technique and the mouth position and everything. You're constantly thinking and putting in effort. And then, all of a sudden — you get a whistle. And from that point on, you can whistle, without thinking anything — you just do it. And the more you do it, the less you think about *how* to do it. Even if you try whistling months later, you'll still have it. Why is that?

That's muscle memory. So without getting too scientific here, there's a part of your brain called the *cerebellum*, or as we say in Swedish "lillhjärnan", which means the little brain. This part is about 10% of the brain's mass, but it contains 80% of all the neurons. Pretty amazing, right? The cerebellum receives information from the sensory system and then regulates motor movements. So this little guy is really important for learning new behaviors, including painting.

Practicing art daily, or weekly, *rewires* your brain's neural pathways, and *hardwires* your hand-eye coordination. This is muscle memory. And this will gradually improve your ability to paint great stuff easily and without thinking too much.

So why am I talking about the brain and weird science stuff? Well, it's to drive home the point that keeping up **good practice** will help your brain store muscle memory that allows you, in the process, to master a new skill, which in this case is painting awesome art.

So how can you learn quickly, achieve this muscle memory, and build a great painting habit? How should you practice art?

Here are seven steps you can use to help get you get the most out of your practice:

Step #1: Make it into a ceremony.

By making your practice time something ceremonial and fun, like, for example, boiling some tea or coffee, putting on some great music, firing up Photoshop and sitting down to start painting, it'll reinforce the habit.

Step #2: Know what it is you want to paint.

Having a clear goal or a good idea and knowing what result you're after is the best foundation upon which to start your practice.

Step #3: Start simple.

Start with something simple and small that you actually think you can pull off. You can always go bigger later as you improve.

Step #3: Celebrate!

Give yourself prizes for small victories! After you've finished a painting, take some time off and go on a nice walk through the woods, grab a beer or a little sweet treat. You've earned it!

Step #4: If you miss a practice day, don't be too hard on yourself.

Your energy isn't always there, but you can always get it back. Try again tomorrow!

Step #5: Paint with your community.

A big reason why we have the Evenant VIP group is so that you can share your work and practice with others who also want to improve their art. Share, discuss and collaborate, guys — it helps a bunch.

Step #6: Don't worry about the result.

I've lost count of how many bad paintings and drawings I've done. Every one would make me cringe, but by overcoming that and not caring too much about the result, you can just move on to another painting.

Step #7: Practice makes progress.

Tell yourself you're doing this to improve, not to make perfect artworks — after all, there's no such thing. Practice makes progress — not perfect.

So now you know how to get started on your awesome journey to becoming great at concept art, and building the necessary habits to practice. All that I'm asking for in return is that you commit — because I can guarantee you:

It's worth it.



Closing Words

While there is much to dive into about art, design, creativity and productivity, I have tried to put the most important aspects of these subjects in this little ebook. Using these fundamentals is something I truly believe in, and they contain an element of simplicity that is so beneficial in everything we do.

So you now know the way to achieve great success in your art journey from the very beginning, from learning the proper mindsets, all the way through to understanding design principles and fundamentals, to finishing paintings, and ultimately to reaching greater heights in your art career.

If there is one thing I want you to take to heart from this ebook, it is that you *stay simple*. Simplicity in everything. It will allow you to direct your effort towards what really matters, and take your art to the next level as you continue to learn new methods, techniques, and insights.

Stay awesome, and never stop creating.

Walid Feghali

